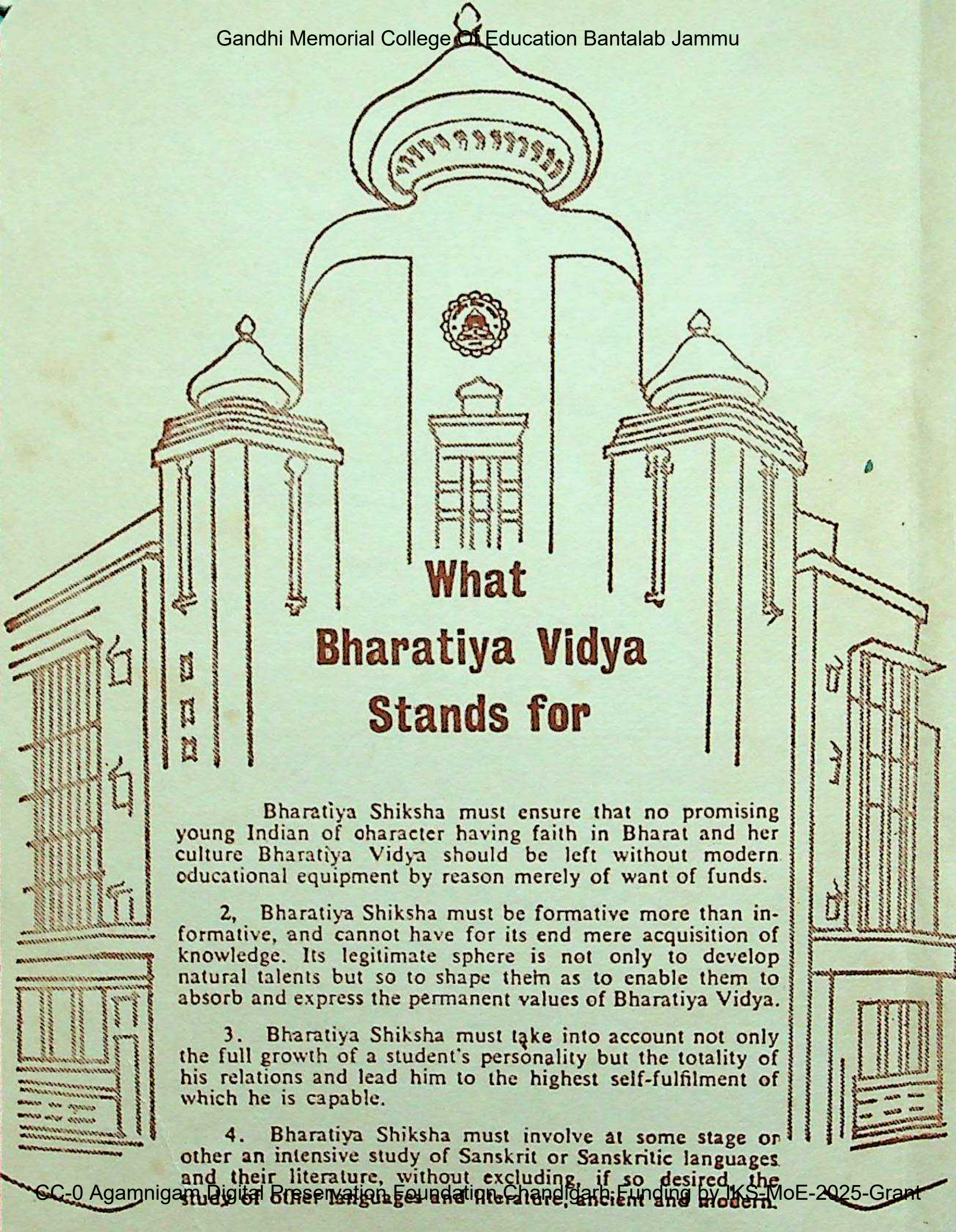
Bhavan's Book Universi

Religion in the light of Reason and Science

R. B. LAL

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY-400007



What Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2, Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

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6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Sishya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which is flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form of attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world.

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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To
Sri Krishna
whose
Life and Teachings
have provided
the inspiration and the material
for
this book

Every institution is a currency which we stamp with our own portrait; it soon becomes unrecognizable and in process of time must return to the mint. Nature exults in forming, dissolving and reforming her crystals. Changeless change is the essential condition of life.

—*Swami Rama Tirtha*

KULAPATI'S PREFACE

THE BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an All-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata,* summarised by one of the greatest Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita,* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita,* which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI:
3rd October 1951.

K. M. MUNSHI

PREFACE

The task of bringing religion into harmony with science is, indeed, stupendous. For one thing, it requires not only respect for both these disciplines but also some insight into them and their common ground. There is also a widespread fear—unjustified though—that science may undermine the very foundations of religion without giving anything worth while in replacement. Anyway, in spite of my best efforts I could not find any records of earlier attempts at synthesis of religion with science. This is what has led to the writing of this book as the culmination of my lifelong pursuit of this fascinating subject.

It may be wondered whether it is not like rushing in where angels fear to tread. But I am heartened by Sri Krishna's assurance that in human beings He is desire not contrary to Dharma. As such, this undertaking is due to His inspiration, and to Him also belongs whatever is new and constructive in this work.

Reason and science are not meant to displace, much less to destroy, religion. As a matter of fact science and religion are complementary, serving different needs of man. Roughly speaking, science gives power and resources while religion teaches their proper use. With the advancement of science resources are growing fast and religion must keep pace with them.

Science is well established as a mode of investigation. It represents the collective wisdom of mankind and is based on solid facts as actually observed in the world. It is, therefore, axiomatic that religious teachings which accord with science are far superior to those which contradict science.

Similarly the scientific method is ideal for screening religious ideas and recovering lost gems of religion. It is indispensable when faith affords no guidance, for example, in dealing with dogmas which are contrary to facts, which divide humanity into warring camps, permit social injustice or promote human irresponsibility: doctrines or interpretations which are mutually contradictory or conflicting. Even the useful lessons of religion will be better observed in practice when the reason and the necessity for them are clearly understood.

Science is an ally of eternal truths but exposes flaws and weaknesses. As a result of scientific treatment religion is no loser but emerges brighter, purer and stronger, for the dross is removed and the essential is separated from the insignificant, the grain from the husk. This scientific pruning and weeding, this compression and concentration, of religious teachings will highlight the best in the holy books. This distilled essence of religion, expressed in the simplest and fewest words, is what the world needs today more than anything else for the remaking of man.

If this book stimulates rethinking as to the true role of religion in life and the most important duties of the common man, my labours would not have been in vain.

I am indebted to the authors and publishers of the many books from which I have quoted. My best thanks are also due to Swami Amitananda and Sri Yogeshwar Ji, who were kind enough to read through the drafts of the essays and gave me much encouragement and valuable advice. Finally, I must also express my gratitude to Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for their kindness in publishing my articles in their esteemed journal and for bringing them out, as revised and amplified by me, in book form.

R. B. LAL

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CHAPTER 1

THE NEED FOR SYNTHESIS

Men of religion usually find it more convenient to dismiss science as irrelevant or trivial than to come to terms with it. But many scientists interested in religion are of the opinion that science and religion are not enemies but friends, in fact, complementary. Thus in the inimitable words of Einstein, "science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind." According to Millikan, Nobel Prize winner in Physics, "human well-being and all human progress rest at bottom upon two pillars...(1) the Spirit of religion and (2) the Spirit of science (or knowledge)."

Alexis Carrel, Nobel Laureate in medicine, has expressed similar views. "None of the acquisitions made by humanity must be set aside. By utilising at the same time intellect and faith, science and religion, mathematics and love, we shall be able to do what science and religion, acting separately, have been incapable of doing." This school of thought is attracting even theologians and other thinkers. For example, Dean W. R. Mathews said before a distinguished gathering of scientists: "I pray that the course of development in both (religion and science) may bring them closer together, each learning from the other, so that these two majestic forms of the spirit of man may unite in the worship and service of the God of truth."

"But to my mind", writes Beatrice Webb, in the book *I Believe,* "there is one hopeful portent. Men of science endowed with the religious temperament are today reinterpreting the mystical meaning of the universe; and it is they who may bring about a new synthesis between our discovery of the true and our self-dedication to the beautiful and the good." In his book *A Threefold Cord* Lord Samuel, statesman-philosopher, writes, "Philosophy, science and religion should no longer be content to remain at cross purposes, but should combine their forces, and each starting from its own standpoint, should join in building up that copherent body of rational thought, of which our civilization stands in such urgent need."

Both religion and science are intended to serve man, though in different ways. Therefore, even on general grounds, they need no more be in conflict with each other than his eyes and hands, his shoes and spectacles or food and water. Broadly speaking, science caters to the physical needs of man, and religion to all his higher needs, such as love, goodness, truth and justice which lie outside the domain of science. Animals are happy when their physical needs have been met; not so man. He cannot live by bread alone and, strange as it may sound, the more his material wants are satisfied, the more insistent become his psychological, moral and spiritual problems.

Science has placed vast powers in the hands of man and there is an imminent danger that he may misuse them to destroy himself or even the entire human race. Every advance of science is bringing home more pointedly the widening gap between man's material and intellectual progress and his moral and spiritual backwardness. This threat from science can be met only by a religion which is based on scientific and universal principles, whose watchword is character and which requires men to live in peace and goodwill and strive together for the good of all.

The seers of ancient India were well aware of the importance of secular knowledge for a successful life. Thus the *Isha Upanishad*, in a famous pronouncement, declared that man needs spiritual knowledge (Vidya) as well as worldly knowledge (A-Vidya), the former for attaining salvation or God-realisation and the latter for living happily in the world. Neither variety of knowledge is by itself complete or sufficient for the multifarious requirements of man. The *Isha Upanishad* further emphasised that those devoted exclusively to worldly knowledge are enveloped in darkness, but in still greater darkness are those who care only for spiritual knowledge. This is understandable, because the former by attending to the things of the world at least gain some happiness in life, but the latter get no happiness here or hereafter.

Following the Gita's classification of knowledge into three grades, it may be stated that religion is on the lowest plane of knowledge when it regards other religions or science as its enemies. Likewise scientific knowledge is childish and immature when it regards religion as old wives' tales or as an opiate for the masses. It is characteristic of the deeper insight that it welcomes other knowledge, sees relationships where none are apparent on the surface, and looks upon all disciplines, including religion and science, as collaborators in the common task of developing better men and a better society.

Of all the religions in the world Hinduism alone welcomes science and its greatness is enhanced rather than diminished when it is examined under the spotlight of science. Its fundamental tenets have their scientific counterparts and are necessary and useful for all mankind. Unfortunately, many of them have fallen into oblivion or disuse and this is a major cause of our decline. Our task is to dig out the best principles of our religion, diligently and patiently, with the help of science and to broadcast them to the people all over the world.

Below are given, by way of illustration, some important lessons of science which can be used to illuminate and clean up the teachings of religion.

The Reign of Law

For many years science made little progress because it was believed that the world was ruled by the will of God, which was both unknowable and uncontrollable by man. Science began to develop by leaps and bounds when it was realized that natural events follow set patterns and obey definite laws, which are eternal, universal, fixed, self-acting and, above all, discoverable and even predictable.

Explaining this principle of the Uniformity of Nature, Sir James Jeans writes in his book *Physics and Philosophy*: "What has happened once will, in similar circumstances, happen again; the events of nature do not occur at random but after an unvarying pattern. Once this discovery had been made, physical science became possible. Its primary aim is to discover this pattern of events, in so far as it governs the happenings of the inanimate world."

In his book *Belief and Action* Lord Samuel writes: "The reign of law in physical nature has been recognised. In the realm of matter at least—whatever dispute there may still be as to the realm of mind—effects follow causes uniformly and with certainty. Every event is the consequence of previous events: every thing that happens is the effect of a combination of a multitude of prior causes: and like causes always produce like effects. The Laws of Causality and of the Uniformity of Nature prevail everywhere and always."

All science is based upon these two postulates, which are well confirmed by its remarkable achievements. Students of Hindu philosophy will recognise in them the well-known Law of Karma applied to the material world.

Uncertainty and Complementarity Principles

When ultramicroscopic or sub-atomic particles are investigated, it is found that the very process of observation changes the phenomenon under observation. This led Nobel Prize winning physicist Werner Heisenberg to his famous Uncertainty Principle, according to which the whole or final truth is for ever beyond the reach of man and whatever he is able to discover is only a partial image of the reality, a mere facet of the truth seen from a particular angle. Thus we get different pictures of the reality, which are sometimes mutually exclusive; nevertheless they are not contradictory but only complementary. Light sometimes behaves as waves and sometimes as particles. The Wave and Quantum theories of light are an illustration of the Complementarity Principle.

These two principles have wide applications in religion and, in fact, in our daily lives. They give us a new insight —a new way of looking at things.

If our knowledge of the physical world, which is open to our senses and intellect, must be always tentative, imperfect and limited, much more so must be our knowledge of the spiritual world whose roots lie far beyond our ken. This is why the Vedas declared "Neti, Neti"—not this, not this, meaning, "This is not the whole truth. This is not the ultimate reality." In other words, there must be many ways of understanding, describing and approaching God—each with an element of truth but none exhausting its totality. Only by combining different views can one get a stereoscopic picture of the reality.

It will be seen that the Complementarity Principle is just a generalization of universal and well-known facts. Since the cosmos is one entity every one of its parts, however important, is necessarily incomplete by itself. Each part completes and is completed by many others. The greatest needs the smallest, not only for its own sake but also for the sake of the whole. Thus man is incomplete without woman, teacher without pupil, land without sea, physics without chemistry, the sun without planets and vice versa. Continuing in the same vein, can we not say that religion is incomplete without science, the West without the East, meditation without action, any one religion without its peers, and even the glory of God without His creation?

From the Principle of Complementarity flow two other vital principles—those of Interdependence and Mutual Cooperation. A new branch of science called ecology is bringing out how living things depend on one another and on the external environment. Science itself is a grand personification of the spirit of cooperation. Every discovery of science, every new machine and instrument, is the product of many heads and hands—past as well as present—each adding to the work of the others.

Cooperation is one of the profoundest lessons that religion has to learn from science. Religions fighting with one another are objects of contempt; they are committing collective hara-kiri. For it even half the things which have been said against each religion by the others are true, then all religions are only fit for the scrap heap. But if religions work in union with one another, for common, wisely chosen, objectives, they can remake the world. And this is what is expected of them. Enlightened religion must emphasise the complementarity of nations, races and religions, as the Gita did many centuries ago. "As soon as man perceives the diversified existence of beings as rooted in the One Supreme Being and spreading forth from Him, he attains Brahma. "However men approach Me, even so do I welcome them; for the path men take from every side is Mine."

Some Practical Examples

There are many problems in religion which cannot be solved by faith but require an appeal to reason and science.

Some religions teach that God created the universe out of nothing and within six days man appeared on the scene.

The Hindu view is that God projected the universe out of himself and the process of evolution till the emergence of man took millions of years. Here science can be used to resolve the tangle, for all its weight is on the side of the doctrine that every thing in the world has evolved from a single source and has taken ages to do so.

According to one school of thought all details in a man's life are determined by Divine Will. Another view is that man can win salvation only by faith in a particular saviour. In contrast, the Hindu view is that man is responsible to carve out his destiny by his own efforts. Which of these doctrines is more in accord with truth and better for man? Here, again, science shows the way; for it has established that the physical universe is ruled by fixed laws and systems without any interference by supernatural beings. Therefore it is quite justifiable to extend the same principle from the known to the unknown.

Such major differences are found not only among different religions but even within the same religion. Thus, while some authorities hold that the Gita advocates Bhakti Yoga, others consider that its favourite Yoga is Karma Yoga or Dhyana Yoga or Jnana Yoga—each according to his own inclinations. We are still faced with the question as to which Yoga is best for mankind. Have we any means of ascertaining the real intention of Sri Krishna?

To give another example. The traditional view regards visions of gods and goddesses as high watermarks of holiness. And one of the greatest saints of modern times, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, prayed and pined for a vision of the Divine Mother until his wish was fulfilled. On the other hand, Ramana Maharshi, another very great saint, pooh-poohed the pursuit of visions by the common man, as in his opinion the nature of the vision is on the same plane as the seer, that is to say, the vision leaves the seer spiritually unchanged. How are we to choose between these two views which are poles apart?

One age-old controversy relates to the comparative merits of conventional worship, on the one hand, and self-discipline, right conduct and altruism, on the other. These activities, which are really complementary, have been depicted as rivals; and, in consequence, faith and worship have well succeeded in ousting morality. Actually, if we study our scriptures closely and with an open mind, we find that some of the highest authorities have compared worship with conduct and have given their clear verdict that the spiritual value of religious exercises does not depend on those exercises but on the man's behaviour with fellow beings; in other words, right conduct is primary, faith and worship secondary. It is a pity that such precious pronouncements have been relegated to obscurity by giving prominence to faith, worship and meditation as the sole means of God-realization.

When experts differ, as they often do in religious matters, the layman is bewildered and does not know what to do. The choice is very hard because it seems a sacrilege to discard or devalue the opinions of any revered saint. But as a matter of fact, this is precisely what we are doing, because whatever view we accept, we automatically reject all the rest. Only we are doing it unconsciously, haphazardly and according to our own fancy. Very often our choices have been wrongly made; and this is the chief cause of the decay of religion. If the correct choices are made, using the collective wisdom of mankind; if dogmas which are irrational, harmful or contrary to facts are eliminated, if the ennobling and unifying principles of religion are emphasised, religion will be rid of its dross and become an elevating force in the lives of millions.

In religion, as elsewhere, only the best is good enough for us. This best, which is continually being bettered, should be selected with the utmost care and conveyed to the people in the simplest and fewest words. Time will ultimately weed out the unfit elements of religion, but it is far better to do the screening ourselves, deliberately and methodically, than to leave it to the truthless and uncertain ravages of Time.

CHAPTER 2

TWO PARADOXES

Two popular doctrines of religion have confused believers and non-believers alike and done much harm to the cause of religion. One is that worship of God, in any of its several forms, guarantees spiritual perfection and God-realization. The other is that supernatural powers, the ability to perform miracles, to see visions of God and hold conversation with him are the hall-marks of spiritual attainment.

Both these statements are valid so far as virtuous persons are concerned. All over the world saints have extolled the benefits of prayer and worship and gone into raptures describing the ecstasies of mystic experiences. Their evidence is unanimous and unquestionable. Even some eminent scientists have recognized the value of prayer and occult experiences. Thus Alexis Carrel, Nobel Prize winner in medicine, wrote: "Prayer is the most powerful form of energy one can generate. It is a force as real as terrestrial gravity. As a physician, I have seen men, after all other therapy had failed, lifted out of disease and melancholy by the serene effort of prayer...Prayer, like radium, is a source of luminous, self-generating energy...when we pray we link ourselves with the inexhaustible motive power that spins the universe...Even in asking, our human deficiencies are filled and we arise strengthened and repaired...Whenever we address God in fervent prayer, we change both soul and body for the better. It could not happen that any man or woman could pray for a single moment without some good result."

As regards mystic experiences, even so discerning a thinker as C.E.M. Joad equated them with spirituality. In his book 'The Present and Future of Religion' he wrote: "For me the essence of religion is mysticism......the future of religion is for me one in which the experience of the mystic will become the experience of the ordinary man."

But demons and other unholy persons tell us quite a different story about the results of worship and mystic experiences. Thus according to the Bible Lucifer was originally an angel devoted to prayer and worship and enjoying prolonged communion with God. Still he ended up as Satan, the tempter and corrupter of mankind. Many other angels also rebelled against God and turned to devils.

Likewise the demons of Hindu mythology, such as Ravana and Hiranyakashipu, would spend years in worship and austerities, eventually some god would appear and grant them a boon by which they would add to their diabolical powers and become super-demons. History was repeated in the case of many other persons who, after long spells of prayer and penance, got what they wanted including the power or weapons to crush their enemies. Mythological figures apart, the common experience of mankind also reveals this great puzzle: that occasionally religious pursuits, far from curbing wickedness, even seem to support and encourage it.

Thus we get some mutually contradictory facts. Worship and mysticism promote holiness in saints, increase the devilish powers of the evil-minded and leave the common folk largely unaffected so far as spirituality is concerned. Orthodox and religious persons see only one set of facts; atheists and sceptics see only the other. Both views are one-sided, unwholesome. Correct judgments can be based only on a complete knowledge of the facts. When contrary facts are brought to light, science does not discard them but evolves a better, more comprehensive theory which explains them as well as the old facts. Applying this technique to the present problems, a probable explanation readily suggests itself. Religious exercises only help in fulfilling desires—whatever they are; and mystic experiences are of the same level of spirituality as the experiencer.

Religious exercises do not necessarily make a man good or holy. Their results largely conform to the pattern of his dominant motives and desires. As a result of his prayers he may get wealth, health, power or position, or may see beatific visions. But this does not mean that he has become holier, nobler or purer than he was before, or spiritually superior to his next-door neighbour. An analogy may be seen in man's intellectual acquisitions which, being the nearest approach to his spiritual development, may reasonably be expected to throw some light on the latter.

Psychologists have carried out extensive research with various processes of learning such as reading, typing, memorising and sending or receiving messages on the telegraph. Their unanimous conclusions are: that (a) mere repetition or a lot of practice is not the cause of learning; (b) practice combined with the will to learn is the real cause of learning; and (c) the intention or purpose of the learner largely determines whether or not he learns, what he learns, how much he learns and the rate at which he learns. These lessons of experimental psychology may well be applied to religious exercises.

Another finding of psychologists is that many more repetitions are needed to acquire any desired degree of proficiency when the learner has no conscious desire to learn than are necessary when he makes a deliberate effort to im--prove his skill. Extending this principle to the field of spirituality, it may be conceded that long practice of religious exercises may eventually still a man's passions and and check his greed, irritability and egoism—even if he has no conscious desire to overcome these weaknesses. But the results are much better and quicker if he makes a systematic effort to improve himself and sets this as one of the major aims of his life. In actual practice it is generally found that most people—saints and laymen alike—are perfectly happy with their character, wisdom and goodness. What they want from their religious pursuits is wealth, power, peace of mind or mystic visions, and no wonder, this is what they get without becoming better otherwise.

Desires, it is well known, are a controlling factor in shaping a man's destiny. 'God never keeps the desires of his devotees unfulfilled', declared the Vedas. Famous psychologist William James said the same thing. "If you only care enough for a result, you will most certainly attain it. If you wish to be rich, you will be rich; if you wish to be good, you will be good. Only you must, then, *really* wish these things and wish them with exclusiveness, and not wish at the same time a hundred other incompatible things just as strongly."

Akin to mystic experiences are cases of extra-sensory perception (E S P), such as telepathy, clairvoyance, telekinesis, apparitions, precognition, materialization and ectoplasm. Mysticism and E S P have received considerable attention at the hands of western scholars, some of whom have written good books, for example, *The Imprisoned Splendour* by Raynor C. Johnson, Professor of Physics, and *E S P in Life and Lab* by J. B. Rhine, biologist and chairman of the Department of Parapsychology, Duke University. An excellent little book by an Indian thinker is Prof. B. L. Atreya's *An Introduction to Parapsychology*. The reality of such phenomena is no longer in doubt. Thus William McDougall, well-known psychologist, writes in his book *Religion and Science of Life*: "In my view the evidence for telepathy is very strong...there has been gathered a very weighty mass of evidence indicating that human personality does not always at death wholly cease to be a source of influence upon the living..." In the words of J. B. Rhine, 'ESP is an actual demonstrable occurrence."

There are two types of mystic phenomena which are well imitated by purely physical means, namely ectoplasm and drugs. As regards ectoplasm, B. L. Atreya says: "It has been discovered that some persons at least have a remarkable power of exuding from their bodies a strange kind of substance, which is a kind of living matter, as it were, and of reabsorbing it again into their bodies....This mysterious living matter, which is a part of the organism, is now known in scientific language as ectoplasm...The reality of ectoplasm has now been established beyond doubt.... I may, however, quote a statements of John Loff...from his work *Talks with the Dead*. 'Upward of one thousand of the so-called dead have materialized and appeared at circles where I have sat... I have looked into their faces, received messages from their spirit voices, been amazed at their intimate knowledge of my early life, and have felt the touch of their celestial hands... It has been observed that when ectoplasm exudes from the body of a medium, her weight decreases in a corresponding degree and it returns to the normal when ectoplasm has been reabsorbed in the body. The forms which the ectoplasm takes, although seen outside and separate from the body of the medium, are substantially part of the medium itself."

Strangely enough, as long ago as 1903, Swami Rama Tirtha expressed similar views and used the same term 'materialization' to explain visions. He said: "Where one sees or hears or understands something else, that is finite. Hearing or seeing spirits, hearing astral bells...is finite... Desire not to see God, for God you already are... Rama

(Swami Rama Tirtha) tells you that what your scriptures say about gods becoming visible on the occasions of Yajna is indeed literally true. But that simply proves the power of collective concentration... Now if Rama alone can materialize any idea he pleases, how could not the hundreds and thousands of people of one mind, chanting the same hymn, thinking of the same form, help materializing it?"

The power to materialize one's thoughts in goods or gods may look superhuman and very spectacular. But it does not necessarily make the owner pure or holy, any more than the superhuman sight of cats and kites or the uncommon olfactory power of dogs makes them paragons of spirituality.

There are several drugs in the market which can induce states similar to mystic experiences. In two small books *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell* Aldous Huxley has given an account of certain experiments which he made with the drug known as 'mescalin.' After taking a pill he recorded: "The Beatific Vision, *Sat Chit Ananda*, Being-Awareness-Blass—for the first time I understood, not on the verbal level, not by inchoate hints or at a distance, but precisely and completely what those prodigious syllables referred to..."

We may reasonably conclude that mystic experiences are not limited to holy or even religious persons. Moreover, even genuine mystic experiences of the pious may possibly have a physical origin quite unconnected with their spiritual attainments. Says Ramana Maharishi, "Men speak of divine visions yet paint them differently with the seer himself in the scene. Even hypnotists can make one see strange scenes and phenomena, which you condemn as tricks and jugglery, whereas the former you extol as divine. Why is this difference? The fact is that all sights are unreal, whether they come from the senses or the mind as pure concepts. This is the truth... The value of the vision is the same as that of the seer. That is to say, the nature of the vision is on the same plane as that of the seer."

Delineation of the characteristics of a saintly person has been a favourite theme with Indian seers. For example, the Gita has given descriptions of a man of steady intellect, a man of knowledge and a man of devotion. But nowhere is it mentioned that the ability to perform miracles or see visions is a mark of holiness. On the other hand, according to Sri Krishna the true vision of God is only that in which the aspirant sees the Supreme Lord equally in all creatures, and not only sees the Lord everywhere, but worships Him residing in all creatures. In the words of Swami Ramdas, "The true vision of utter freedom and immortality comes when the Lord is seen residing equally in all creatures... the soul who is blessed with this exalted experience walks the loftiest path."

The spiritual progress of mankind has been very much retarded because of the widespread misconception that prayer, worship, meditation, and their climax, mystic experiences, are the be-all and end-all of a religious life. As a matter of fact worship alone is no sure way to spirituality and mystic experiences and occult powers are no reliable criteria of holiness.

Leaving details for later discussion, the reader is requested to ponder over the following pronouncements in the *Bhagavata* concerning the spritual value of worship and devotion vis-a-vis the aspirant's personal character and dealings with fellow men.

Bhagavan Kapila to Devahuti:

'He who practises devotion to Me, contemplating harm (to other beings), with pride and malice, ostentatious and seeing difference (everywhere), is one who is impelled by Tamas or ignorance.

'He who seeking objects of enjoyment, fame or riches, worships Me in images and the like—that man who also has the sense of difference, is one who is prompted by Rajas or passion.

'I, the soul of all beings, am always present in all beings; ignoring Me who am there, this mortal man performs the mockery of image worship.

'He who leaves Me (who am) present as Soul and Master in all beings, and in his stupidity, seeks an image, verily pours his offering on the ashes (and not in the fire).

'Doing his duty, one should worship Me, the Master, in images and the like only so long as one does not in one's heart realize Me as established within all beings.

'Therefore, one should honour with gifts and respect, with friendliness and an eye which is not invidious, Me—who, as the soul of all beings, have my temple in all beings.'

Maharshi Narada to Vasudeva:

'The devotee who sees no difference anywhere, who sees God everywhere and in all beings, should be regarded as of the highest class.

'The devotee who practises devotion to the Lord, is friendly to his devotees and kind to the distressed or ignorant, but is indifferent to those who are inimical to God, belongs to the medium grade.

'The devotee who worships the Lord with faith, in his images or otherwise, but renders little service to his devotees or other people is of the ordinary grade.'

A tree is judged by its fruit and a man by his actions. In the final reckoning his spiritual rank depends not on his faith or devotion, superconscious states or occult powers, but on his utility to his fellow beings.

CHAPTER 3

THE MEANING OF RELIGION

Religion as Worship of God

In the popular mind religion is synonymous with adoration of God. Many eminent thinkers, specially in the west, have defined it as such. For examlpe, William Temple, famous Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote, "Religion is not an opinion about God...it is a personal relation with God." "It is frequently taken for granted", writes Julian Huxley, "that religion is essentially a belief in a god or gods." The great pioneer anthropologist Tylor proposed 'a belief in spiritual beings' as what he called a minimum definition of religion. Sir James Frazer understands by religion 'the propitiation of powers...believed to control the course of nature and of human life.' Even Thouless, in his admirable approach to the psychology of the religious life, defines religion as 'a felt practical relationship with what is believed in as a superhuman being or beings.'

J. A. T. Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich, summed up the present thinking in his book *Honest to God* in these words: "Worship and prayer would seem to be *the* expression of religion, the activities *par excellence* that distinguish a religious from an irreligious."

This common definition of religion deserves consideration.

Essentials of Religion

For man's physical survival fresh air is the most fundamental requirement. But this is not all he needs. He must have water and many other things besides—food, clothing, shelter, work, rest and recreation. In fact, with the advance of knowledge, his requirements go on multiplying and now include vitamins, minerals and, in case of illness, many kinds of medicines. The most important requirement, we conclude, is not the only requirement; many things of lesser importance are also indispensable.

We have seen that worship of God, supernatural powers and mystic experiences are morally and spiritually neutral, being common alike to the good and the bad, the pious and the impious. However, even assuming, for the sake of argument, that no spiritual progress is possible without prayer and worship, it is reasonable to enquire whether there are any other things which are essential for spiritual development.

The ground of spiritual progress is human life which requires many articles and many activities for its sustenance. Even the most orthodox or devout cannot claim that prayer and worship are the best or most suitable ways of obtaining food, clothing, education or transport. Therefore men must necessarily engage in many secular activities. Though spiritual culture cannot cover them directly, it must have ample provision for them.

Men have to cultivate many kinds of talents and skills in order to earn their living and meet the challenges of life successfully. Development of latent faculties is, therefore, a prerequisite for spiritual uplift. Thus Einstein says, "Every individual should have the opportunity to develop the gifts that may be latent in him. Alone in that way can the individual obtain the satisfaction to which he is justly entitled; and alone in this way can the community achieve its richest flowering." Erich Fromm, noted psychoanalyst, writes in his book *Man for Himself*: "Existence and the unfolding of the specific powers of an organism are one and the same. All organisms have an inherent tendency to actualise their specific potentialities. The aim of man's life is therefore to be understood as the unfolding of his powers according to the laws of his nature."

A society may be lucky to have five or ten per cent people whose physical wants are abundantly met. Can we say—at least in their case—that worship of God is sufficient to take them to the highest perfection? Not at all. They have their own peculiar problems and the correct ways of solving them have to be mastered. Nature has equipped the lower animals with a built-in mechanism which checks over-indulgence automatically, instinctively. But man, having gifts of intellect and free-will, has to exercise his own judgment and control for this purpose. A life of complete abandon is the downhill path to self-destruction. If a man has leisure and gives himself to lethargy, if he grabs everything that comes his way, if he gratifies all the pleasures he can command, he is asking for trouble—physical, mental as well as political. The problems of plenty cannot be solved by forced poverty or by religious exercises but only by self-discipline, self-denial and voluntary sharing with others less fortunate than oneself.

Spiritual progress is inconceivable without a large measure of self-direction, self-control and self-giving, all undertaken gladly and of one's own accord. Religions do not enhance their prestige or effectiveness when they preach or imply that self-discipline is unnecessary or impossible or that both self-discipline and self-dedication come as gifts of God without requiring any effort on man's part, except faith, prayer and meditation.

Will Durant says in his book *The Pleasures of Philosophy,* "In the play of knowledge upon desire, which is the very essence of reason, we have the source and armoury of self-discpline, that power of inhibition which is the last necessity of character and will. The world disciplines us or we discipline ourselves." Dr. H. C. Link, Director of Psychological Service Centre in New York, wrote, "No discovery of modern psychology is, in my opinion, so important as its scientific proof of the necessity of self-sacrifice or discipline to self-realisation and happiness."

In his book, *Out of My Later Years,* Einstein wrote: "A person who is religiously enlightened appears to me to be one who has to the best of his ability liberated himself from tthe fetters of his selfish desires and is preoccupied with thoughts, feelings and aspirations to which he clings because of their superpersonal value." R. A. Millikan, Nobel Laureate in Physics, wrote in his *Autobiography*: "...altruistic idealism is certainly the very essence of the teachings of Jesus..." A. N. Whitehead, unquestionably the foremost and most penetrating of philosophers of our generation, defines religion in these four words: "Religion is world loyalty."

Another Nobel Prize winner, A. H. Compton, held similar views. "Here is the essence of religion... One's God is in truth the spirit that inspires his actions, that which gives him the aspiration and purpose—the will to lose himself in something of value. What is that spirit? The Christian answer is love, that shows itself in deeds that help one's fellows."

In short, self-development, self-discipline and self-dedication are indispensable elements in religion—the very foundation of a spiritual life.

Religion as Right Conduct

Even in India the definition of religion as worship holds the field—though contrary to the ancient wisdom. Thus according to Manu, the first of law-givers, "Morality or right conduct (Sadachar) is the highest Dharma... the sages regard right behaviour as the very root of all austerity. The man performing duty laid down in the scriptures obtains fame here, and, after death, unsurpassed happiness."

The *Bhagavata* has given the following as the basic requirements of Dharma for the common folk in all walks and stages of life: "Non-violence in thought, word and deed; to abide by the truth, not to commit theft, to control desire, anger and avarice and to do only such works as are pleasant and beneficial to all living creatures."

Maharshi Veda Vyasa, the great author of the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata,* taught: "Know this to be the essence of religion and then practise it: refrain from doing unto others what you will not have done unto yourself, which you may resent if done unto you." "One should always design for others such things as one may choose for one's own self."

In the Gita Sri Krishna laid very great stress on the identity of Dharma (righteousness) and Karma (conduct, duty or action) by using the words interchangeably. Therefore for all practical purposes the essential element in Dharma is right conduct or proper performance of all duties, and by doing this, adds Sri Krishna, man attains perfection. The Gita has repeatedly stressed that right conduct leads to the highest good. For example, it says: "The doer of good never treads the path of woe." "By doing all actions as an offering to the Lord man is released from sin and attains God." "Everyone by being devoted to the performance of his own duty attains the highest perfection." The virtuous ones who practise self-control, who work for the welfare of all creatures, who generously share the goods of life with others, are assured of peace and prosperity. God personally attends to their physical and spiritual needs. On the other hand, the selfish who live for themselves and neglect others are bound to the earth; while the wicked, who delight in harming others, have to pay dearly for their misdeeds. As a matter of fact, Sri Krishna has given a clear assurance to the good and warning to the wicked in a well-known verse: "For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for establishing righteousness on a firm footing, I am born from age to age."

In his famous Sermon on the Mount Jesus emphasised that what he valued most is not mere faith, worship or ability to perform miracles but right conduct, that is, obedience to the moral and spiritual laws of God.

"Not every one that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my father who is in heaven...."

"Many will say to me in that day: 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name and done many miracles in thy name?' And then I will profess unto them, 'I never knew you: deaprf from me, you that work inequity.' "

"Everyone, therefore, that heareth these my words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

"And every one that heareth these my words and doth them not, shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house and it fell, and great was the fall thereof."

Tulsidas declared in his immortal epic *Ramacharita Manasa*: "To a virtuous man the world abounds in happiness. As rivers run into the sea, although the latter has no craving for them, so joy and prosperity come unasked and of their own accord to a pious soul."

In the words of Sister Nivedita, "Character is spirituality." Swami Sivananda, one of the well-known saints of modern India, wrote: "Without ethics you cannot have any progress in the spiritual path. Ethics is the foundation of Yoga, the corner-stone of Vedanta and the strong pillar on which the edifice of Bhakti Yoga rests. Ethics is right conduct or Sadachara... Achara is the highest Dharma. It supports the whole universe. It leads one to eternal happiness and immortality...Morality is the gateway to God-realization. It is the master-key of religion. He who leads a moral or virtuous life attains freedom, perfection or Moksha."

"Out of righteousness," declares the *Valmiki Ramayana,* "springs wealth. Out of righteousness springs happiness. Through righteousness one obtains everything. The world has righteousness as its essence."

Religion is Art of Living

Religion is best defined as the art of living, which includes worship and much else. Instead of a religion confined to adoration the world needs one that will inspire all human activities. Western thought is also coming round to this view. Thus C.E.M. Joad says, "Religion, if it is to survive, must become a social force....it must permeate every aspect of our personality and extend into all the avocations of our daily life. What is required, then, is to bring religion out of the church into the market place." Mervyn Stockwood, Bishop of Southwark, writes: "To propitiate the deity with a cultus and ceremonial observances is more congenial and less disturbing than to adhere to his sovereign will. The greatness of Moses and the Biblical leaders lies in their grasp of the true nature of religion. Their people were to prove their belief in God by their personal and social behaviour...Integrity is the hall-mark. Not ritual performances but personal goodness."

The picture of religion that emerges from this discussion is a three-storey building. In the ground-floor is man's daily life with its multifarious requirements like food, health, education, arts and sciences, trade and industry, administration and defence. Proper attention to all responsibilities is the primary duty of man and the most essential part of religion. At the next higher level, in the first-floor, come all the prophets, saviours and incarnations, holy books, temples and churches, symbols and rituals, out of which the aspirant is free to choose any that suit him. In the top-floor, the highest class of religion, appears the quest for God, the Creator, Ruler and Law-Maker. The ground-floor supports the other two storeys. It is the kindergarten where everyone must learn the art of living and obtain a pass before he can qualify for higher spiritual pursuits. If the upper two storeys are destroyed, the ground-work of religion will still remain. But take away the ground-floor and the entire edifice of religion—with its gods and goddesses, scriptures and occult exercises—comes tumbling down.

Oceans are all one though they are given various local names for purposes of identification. Humanity is also one though divided into countless families, each loving its own members best. Likewise true religion is only one, though its names, prophets and rituals necessarily vary according to the lands and peoples they serve. This true religion is the universal religion of right conduct, of love and compassion, of truth and rectitude, of growing knowledge and dedication, and worship of a God who is the same for all, who is all, in all and above all.

CHAPTER 4

BELIEF IN GOD

Religion is mostly centred on God. To many it is synonymous with worship of God. It is, therefore, necessary to examine whether there is any justification for believing in God.

At the outset we may draw a distinction between God as a concept and God as a reality or substance. For everyone who is conscious of God as a reality there are thousands who make use of him as a concept or article of faith. This is by no means so strange as it looks. We know that zero has no existence; yet we give it a name and a form and all mathematics, all science, and all counting in our daily lives make use of cypher. Similarly it is well known that it is impossible to determine the square root of minus one. Yet mathematicians have given it a name and a form. A whole branch of mathematics has been developed using these imaginary numbers and it has practical applications, too, for example in the design of electrical machinery. A more general example is furnished by language. Because it works through ideas and replaces actual objects with words and symbols, language has greatly facilitated the storage, transmission and discovery of knowledge and thereby quickened the march of civilisation. Not only objects but even ideas, words and symbols play an important part in human life, and the concept of God is no exception.

If many people believe in God it is because they find it necessary and useful to do so. He is the one great Mystery which comprehends all other mysteries like those of the immense universe, life and death, soul and mind. As the perfect and infinite, he is the object of endless quest. He is proverbially the help of the helpless, the friend of the friendless and the last refuge of man. It would appear that deep down in human nature there are certain innate impulses which cannot be satisfied except by an appeal to a superior Being who is supernatural, imperishable, infinite and utterly beyond man's senses and intellect. Every now and then the average person is forced to turn to God for help, solace or enlightenment which he failed to find elsewhere. It is for these reasons that Voltaire wrote, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him."

Scientific Grounds for Belief

Are there any scientific or rational grounds for believing in the existence of God? If not, can science at least throw some light on this subject?

Even primitive man noticed the difference between the living and the dead. A living body is warm, breathes and shows various kinds of powers, which are entirely absent in the dead. There is nothing more natural than to explain the difference by supposing the presence of something in the living which is absent from the dead. This something is the individual soul. Further, a dead body is not only devoid of all powers but decays rapidly. But a living body grows, develops and maintains health and vigour. According to the Second Law of Thermodynamics the living must possess a force which enables it to counteract and overcome the inherent tendency of all things to disorder and decay. This is another pointer to the presence of a soul in every living body which quits it at the time of death.

Studies of cases of extra sensory perception also lead to the conclusion that in every man there is something which survives the death of the physical body and can get information without the use of the senses and the intellect. This is yet another indication of the existence of a soul which is immortal and surpasses all the faculties of man. Finally, all the arguments in favour of the theory of reincarnation and the numerous verified cases of recollection of the incidents of past lives are proof of the existence of a soul which has a past and a future beyond the present life. From the existence of a soul in every human being it is only one step to the existence of an Over-soul, of which all the individual souls are mere fragments.

Countless millions would testify to the wonderful results achieved through prayer; and if some prayers are heard and answered there must be a Power that does so.

Some scientists believe that the universe (including all living organisms) behaves like a machine, obeys definite laws and shows no evidence, in any of its workings, of being influenced by a supernatural being. But we are not aware of a machine that comes into existence of its own, grows, develops, repairs and even improves itself, reproduces its own kind, thinks and talks, loves and hates, creates new ideas, sets its own tasks and operates itself. Even the best of computers cannot do so but needs a maker, an operator and a maintainer, besides an external source of energy. Even if the universe is a vast machine, is it not reasonable to believe that it has a creator, ruler and director who is infinitely superior to the vast and wonderful machine he has built?

Science excludes God

The fact that science, despite its amazing achievements, has so far failed to discover God and make a public demonstration of His presence, has led many people, including some scientists, to deny the existence of God. Their reasoning is fallacious because what is unknown is not necessarily non-existent. The truth is that science can never find God.

It is not the way to seek Him. Rather it has expressly excluded God from its purview and owes all its success to this basic strategy.

For many centuries science made very little progress because people used to attribute natural events to supernatural causes, specially the will of God. Now an appeal to the supernatural or the will of God can explain anything and everything; and an explanation which is equally applicable to all events is no explanation at all, for it adds nothing to our knowledge or power. After long experience scientists came to the conclusion that if science was to make any head-way it could do so only by making itself completely independent of personalities, whether human or divine, and by seeking for only natural and proximate causes to explain natural phenomena. Since this practice was adopted the physical sciences began to advance by leaps and bounds.

The total exclusion of God from all scientific research is not too great a price to pay for all that it has accomplished. But having deliberately kept God out of all their investigations and theories, scientists cannot now turn round and say that there is no God because their experiments do not reveal any trace of him. A simple example will clarify the point. We know that sweets can only be prepared by entirely excluding salt; indeed, the addition of salt will spoil the sweets. But can we for that reason say that salt does not exist or is harmful or useless for man? Salt is a necessity of life, though undesirable for sweets. Similarly, though God has no role in science, it cannot be said that he does not exist or is useless for the vast areas of life that lie beyond the realm of science. In fact, science operates in the world of Prakriti or Nature, where God is largely a silent spectator or overseer.

Views of Scientists

A. C. Morrison, physicist and former President of New York Academy of Sciences, has given, in his book *Man Does Not Stand Alone* several reasons why he, as a scientist, believes in God: "First: By unwavering mathematical law we can prove that our universe was designed and executed by a great engineering Intelligence. Second: The resourcefulness of life to accomplish its purpose is a manifestation of all-pervading intelligence. Third: Animal wisdom speaks irresistibly of a good creator who infused instinct in otherwise helpless little creatures. Fourth: Man has something more than animal instinct—the power to reason. Fifth: Provision of all living is revealed in such wonderful phenomena as the genes. So unspeakably tiny are they that if all of them responsible for all the living people in the world could be collected together there would be less than a thimbleful. Yet these ultramicroscopic genes and their companions, the chromosomes, inhabit every living cell and are the absolute keys to all human, animal and vegetable characteristics. This is an example of profound sagacity that could emanate only from a Supreme Intelligence. Sixth: The economy of nature is such that only Infinite Wisdom could have foreseen and prepared with such astute husbandry. Seventh: The fact that man can conceive the idea of God is in itself a unique proof."

The existence of the mystic or supernatural is well recognised even by eminent scientists, philosophers and thinkers. Thus Einstein wrote: "To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty, which our dull faculties can compehend only in their most primitive forms; this knowledge, this feeling, is at the centre of true religiousness. In this sense, and in this sense only, I belong in the ranks of devoutly religious men."

Erwin Schrodinger, winner of Nobel Prize in physics, writes in his book *Mind and Matter*: "No personal God can form part of a world model that has only become accessible at the cost of removing everything personal from it. We know, when God is experienced, this is an event as real as an immediate sense perception or as one's own personality. Like them he must be missing in the space-time picture. I do not find God anywhere in space and time, that is what the honest naturalist tells you. For this he incurs blame from him in whose catechism is written: God is spirit."

Charles Sherrington, Nobel Laureate and one of the greatest of neuro-physiologists, was of the opinion that mind or spirit could not be explained away in terms of matter. In his book *Man on His Nature* he wrote: "Biology cannot go far in its subjects without being met by mind. Though living is analysable and describable by natural science, that associate of living, thought, escapes and remains refractory to natural science. In fact, natural science repudiates it as something outside its ken. A radical distinction has therefore arisen between life and mind. The former is an affair of chemistry and physics; the latter escapes chemistry and physics."

One of the distinguished biologists, J. S. Haldane, wrote in his book *The Sciences and Philosophy*: "It is only a narrow view of what is natural that prevents our recognising the presence of God everywhere within and around us. Nothing is real except God, and relations of time and space are only the order of His manifestation. Nature is just the manifestation of God, and evolution is no mere biological or physical phenomenon, but the order in time relations of His manifestation."

C. J. Herrick, noted biologist, writes in his book *The Evolution of Human Nature*: "...there are, in my opinion, no scientific or philosophic grounds for denying the possibility of an All Knower, the regulating agency of the natural cosmos. Faith in divine power, wisdom and guidance is for many people their strongest motivation for moral conduct and sustenance of spiritual values. It is unseemly for any man of science or any philosopher to condemn that faith, even though he himself may not entertain it... We may render to God the things that are God's and to science only those things that are nature's."

Well-known anthropologist Loren Eiseley writes in his book *The Unexpected Universe*: "I would say that if dead matter has reared up this curious landscape of fiddling crickets, song sparrows and wondering men, it must be plain even to the most devoted materialist that the matter of which he speaks contains amazing, if not dreadful powers, and may not impossibly be, as Hardy has suggested, 'but one mask of many worn by the Great Face behind.' "

"When we pray to our fatherly God," writes A. H. Compton, Nobel Laureate, in his book *The Cosmos of Arthur Holly Compton,* "it is common experience that we receive courage and strength to do deeds of friendliness towards his children. It is hard to think of receiving strength without imagining a Being that gives us the strength." "You can no more convince me," said Warren Weaver, "that there is no such God than you can convince me that a table or a rock is not solid; in each case the evidence is simple, direct and uniform."

Summarising his arguments for the existence of God, Alexis Carrel, Nobel Prize winner in medicine, says in his book *Reflections on Life*: "The existence of God explains, better than any other hypothesis, the results of prayer, the phenomena of mysticism and the sense of the holy. It is prudent to consider the need of the divine, not as illusory but as the expression of structural characteristics of the human spirit which are more or less developed according to the individual. Since the universe is a coherent system, the fact of there being such a need makes us anticipate a means of satisfying it in the external world. For example, the cells of the organism would not be aerobic if there were no oxygen in the atmosphere. Equally, the need of water, fat, sugar or protein implies the existence of these substances in the external environment. It is permissible to attribute the same significance to a more or less obscure need felt by a great number of human beings to communicate with an invisible and sovereignly powerful spirit: a spirit at once personal and immanent in all things, which is manifested to us through intuition, revelation and the natural laws."

Belief in God not Indispensable

It is not my intention to suggest, by quoting these eminent scientists, that the existence of God has been proved or accepted by science. Their belief in God is as much an act of faith as with any of us. But it is clear that this belief is not irrational or unscientific. It can coexist in the best of brains along with the deepest scientific insight. Science excludes God. A scientific religion makes Him optional, just the private business of the individual. Not only atheists and some thinking and scientific people but Buddhists and Jains have no use for God. Any modern definition of religion must, therefore, have room for those who believe in God as well as for those who do not.

Though the Gita is essentially theistic, Sri Krishna did not make it obligatory for common folk to believe in God or acquire knowledge of Him. Dividing the human society broadly into four classes, teachers, warrior-administrators, businessmen and workmen, the Gita enumerated their principal duties in these words: "Serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness and also uprightness, wisdom, knowledge, belief in God, are Brahmana duty, born of his own nature; prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity, and also not flying from battle, generosity, the nature of a ruler, are the Kshatriya duty, born of his own nature. Ploughing, protection of kine and trade are the Vaishya duty, born of his own nature. Action of the nature of service is the Shudra duty, born of his own nature. Man reacheth perfection by each being intent on his own duty." It will be noticed here that belief in God and knowledge of him are among the most important duties of only those who take to religion as a whole-time occupation. Moreover, as we have seen, belief in God, even worship of him, does not, by itself, make any one good or holy.

A telephone transmits the voice but not the picture of the people who are talking at either end. Likewise the instruments and techniques of science are incapable of revealing God. This is understandable because science is a product of the intellect, while God is not simply intelligence but also life, love and bliss. No wonder, the sages of India declared that God reveals himself only to those who seek him wholeheartedly, by all the means at their command and through all their activities.

Believers in God have committed more crimes and shed more blood in the name of religion than all the atheists, non-believers and sceptics. God, undoubtedly the central figure of religion, is also the most subtle and elusive. He is infinitely more powerful than an atom bomb and more dangerous too, specially in the hands of spiritual and intellectual adolescents. Half the troubles of religion are due to misconceptions about God. It is for this reason that the seers of India made belief in God secondary and right conduct the primary factor in man's spiritual evolution.

CHAPTER 5

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Some religions teach that God created the universe out of nothing, though science has definitely established that nothing can be created out of nothing. Some others say that God created the universe as a potter makes pots out of clay, but do not clarify where the potter got the clay. According to these views God rules the world from his throne in some high and remote heaven. Though His power and wisdom may be present everywhere, He Himself is entirely apart from His creation and far, far above it.

Contrary to this view, Indian sages declared that God created the world out of Himself, as a spider produces a web, as trees grow out of the earth and hair out of the body. For example, in the Gita Sri Krishna says, "I am the source of the entire creation and in Me it again dissolves." God is not merely the efficient but also the material cause of the universe. This, according to Hinduism, is not just a philosophic concept but is the highest purpose of religion to be realized in daily life through thought, word and deed. For says Sri Krishna, "As soon as a man perceives the diversified existence of beings as rooted in One Supreme Being and spreading forth from Him, he attains Brahma."

This fundamental concept of Hinduism—that everything has evolved out of God and is a manifestation or concretization of Him—comes right within the sphere of science. For if all things have had a common origin it should be possible to prove scientifically that star and man, wood and iron, sand and sunlight, thought and electricity, food and feeling, movement and microbe are all, in essence, one and the same thing, derived from the same thing or reducible to the same thing.

The Common Source of All

Cosmologists studying the origin of the universe have come to the conclusion that all the countless galaxies, suns and planets were originally an emanation from one single glowing ball of super-dense matter, which some scientists call the primordial atom and others the primordial amoeba. Thus Hans Reichenback writes in his book *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*: "Some two thousand million years ago there seems to have been the beginning of our universe, of our sun and our earth. The heavens reveal an evolution pointing to a common beginning at a remote date inscribed in the figures of spectroscopy and geology. Even pieces of meteorites, captured by our earth on their path through the universe, show the same date stamped into their material in terms of radioactive decay products. Once upon a time there was a huge glowing ball, the amoeba, from which the universe sprang; that is how the story of creation begins."

One tremendous explosion sent fragments of the original glowing ball of fire flying apart in various directions at terriffic speeds. These movements continue to this day with ever increasing velocities, giving rise to the phenomenon of the Expanding Universe. After millions of years galaxies, stars, planets and satellites were formed; and as they cooled down, their matter condensed into elements, compounds and other substances. In course of time water appeared, which is essential for the maintenance of life. Subsequently minute plants were formed and later on animalcules. The evolution from simple to complex continued and finally man appeared on the scene. His body and mind have developed remarkably but his moral and spiritual progress seems to be stalled as if on a hump.

From this theory of creation it follows that all kinds of matter, all forms of energy, all living creatures, all thought and emotion, have evolved out of one primordial glowing ball of highly concentrated Matter-Energy. It is not the business of science to enquire how or from where this original ball came into being, but to persons who are religious-minded it was the first manifestation of the Supreme, Unmanifest Spirit. Thus J. W. N. Sullivan, a scientist, writes in his book *The Limitations of Science*: "The sciences of geology, palaeontology ad biology have revealed an orderly development of living forms from the lower to the higher, which has been going on for many millions of years. We may well suppose that it is part of the order of nature that such development should continue. Millikan quotes:

'A firemist and a planet,
A crystal and a cell,
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
And caves where the cave-men dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod.
Some call it Evolution,
And others call it God."

Matter and Energy are One

All the objects known to man are found by chemists to be composed of a few hundred thousand different kinds of substances. These, again, are found to be made up of ninety odd elementary substances which cannot be subdivided further into simpler substances. Investigations, however, show that all the different kinds of atoms consist of three fundamental particles, namely protons, neutrons and electrons. These are the three building blocks out of which all matter of the universe has been built. Another recent discovery of science is that these elementary bricks, which for practical purposes are different from one another, are essentially one and the same because they can all be converted into one another and into radiant energy.

For many years it was known that different forms of energy like motion, heat and electricity, could be transformed into one another. Then another great insight was revealed to man with Einstein's discovery of the equivalence of matter and energy. Matter and energy, instead of being separate entities, became one—just two aspects of the same reality.

Summing up the present position, Lincoln Barnett writes in his book *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*: "Through the centuries the varied currents of discovery, theory, research and reason have steadily converged, mingled and flowed onward into ever widening and deepening channels. The first long advance was the reduction of the world's multifarious substances into 92 natural elements. Then these elements were reduced to a few fundamental particles. Concurrently the various 'forces' in the world came to be recognised one by one as varying manifestations of electro-magnetic force, and all the different kinds of radiation in the universe—light, heat, X-rays, radio waves, gamma rays—as nothing more than electro-magnetic waves of varying wave length and frequency. Ultimately the features of the universe distilled down to a few basic qualities—space, time, matter, energy and gravitation. But in Special Relativity, Einstein demonstrated the equivalence of matter and energy, and in General Relativity he showed the indivisibility of the space-time continuum. The Unified Field Theory now culminates and climaxes this coalescing process. For from its august perspective the universe is revealed as one elemental field in which each star, each atom, each wandering comet and slow-wheeling galaxy and flying electron is seen to be but a ripple or tumescence in the underlying space-time unity. And so a profound simplicity supplants the surface complexity of nature. The distinctions between gravitational force and electro-magnetic force, matter and energy, electric charge and field, space and time, all fade in the light of their revealed relationships and resolve into configurations of the four dimensional continuum which is the universe. Thus all man's perceptions of the world and all his abstract intuitions of reality merge finally into one, and the deep underlying unity of the universe is laid bare."

Unity of Living and Non-living

Having etablished the equivalence of all matter and energy, we now come to the equivalence of the living and non-living. The transformation of one into the other is a matter of common experience. At the time of death all living organisms pass into non-living matter while a reverse change accompanies the birth and maintenance of all living organisms. "A metamorphosis of non-living matter into living is going on today", said Charles Sherrington, the greatest neurophysiologist of his time, in his book *Life's Unfolding*. "Lifeless energy systems from the air and soil and sun's radiation, the plant builds up into the living energy systems of itself. We have to be renewed and our renewal is from energy systems not in ordinary parlance alive. In the course of nine months the speck of the egg cell grows into a living bulk 15,000 times greater than it was at the outset. This increment of living energy systems has been created from non-living energy systems under the starting influence of a tiny speck which is alive."

As a matter of fact scientists are now convinced that there is no sharp line of demarcation between living and non-living matter. Thus G. R. Harrison writes in his book *What Man May Be,* "There are millions of levels of being alive... But the more closely one examines the border line between living and non-living matter, the more one is forced to conclude that there is no boundary that is definite, no place where a breath of life comes sharply to inform matter."

In man's biochemical factory food is daily transformed into blood, bone and flesh, hair, nerves and muscles, and into various forms of physical, mental and emotional energy. Special kinds of matter—drugs—dull or stimulate the growth of the body or its various physiological function. It is also well known that thought and emotion can produce similar effects on the body as well as on each other. Love is known to promote the development of children and its lack can cause various ailments.

We may reasonably conclude that non-living molecules and living cells, thought and feeling have a good deal in common because they can all be converted into one another. There must be a hidden force that effects these various transformations though it does not come within the field of science and eludes all its instruments.

Another remarkable illustration of unity, expressing itself in variety, is furnished by electricity, the wonder worker of science. It bears a close resemblance to God and shows many of his properties. It is localised, yet all-pervasive. It is both material and non-material; static and dynamic; gentle and terrible. It possesses vast powers of many kinds. It works the magic brains called computers. In fact, the human brain is itself a marvellous electrical machine. Above all, electricity is a sign, an invariable concomitant, of life. Thus it is an amazing synthesis of matter, energy, life and mind, being a characteristic accompaniment of them all. It is the meeting ground of the natural and the supernatural. Its exact nature is unknown. By the discovery of electricity science has undoubtedly opened a window on the mystery of the Divine.

Thou Art He

Many scientists who are interested in the mysteries that lie beyond the domain of science are coming to believe in a God who is both immanent and transcendent, who works by permanent laws and systems rather than by the constant use of His will. Thus Einstein writes in his book *The Universe as I see It*: "This firm belief, a belief bound up with deep feeling, in a superior mind that reveals itself in the world of experience, represents my conception of God. In common parlance this may be described as pantheistic." Echoing the famous Vedantic aphorism '*Soham*', I am He—, Schrodinger, the illustrious discoverer of Wave Mechanics and winner of Nobel Prize, writes in his book *What is Life?*: "In Christian terminology to say: 'Hence I am God Almighty'—sounds both blasphemous and lunatic. But consider whether the above inference is not the closest a biologist can get to proving God and immortality at one stroke. In itself the insight is not new...from the early great Upanishads the recognition Atman=Brahman (the personal self equals the omnipresent, all-comprehending eternal Self) was in Indian thought considered, far from being blasphemous, to represent the quintessence of the deepest insight into the happenings of the world...the mystics of many countries have described...the unique experience of his or her life in terms that can be condensed in the phrase, 'I have become God.' "

Biologist J.A. Thomson said, "The general trend of evidence is strongly in favour of the belief in a continuity of process from nebula to earth and from cooling earth to awakening life, always supposing, however, that mind is the warp to matter's woof, for in the beginning was Mind, and that Mind is the light of men." "The first grand lesson," writes G. G. Simpson in his book *The Meaning of Evolution,* "was that of the unity of life... Not only are all men brothers; all living things are brothers in the very real sense that all have arisen from one source and developed within the divergent intricacies of one process... Man is part of nature and he is kin to all life." Julian Huxley writes in his book *Religion without Revelation,* "Science has gone a long way towards proving the essential unity of all phenomena...there seems no escape from the belief that all reality has both a material and a mental side."

J. B. S. Haldane, eminent biologist, said in his lectures on the *Unity and Diversity of Life*: "I think that only two of the discoveries of this century in physics are of profound philosophical importance. One is Einstein's discovery that time and space are aspects of the same kind of relationship. The other is that the distinction between the particles of the same kind is not absolute...it helps me to believe that the distinction between you and me, or the nearest mosquito and me, is nothing absolute either." Haldane concluded his lectures on this inspiring note: "On the walls of the large room in the zoological laboratory at Munster, where Professor Rensch keeps his living animals, are written the words 'Tat Twam Asi'—(Thout art He). If I have helped any of you to understand some of the implications of this great saying, my lectures have not been in vain."

Like Cells in the Body of God

Another great doctrine of Hinduism is that not only is God present in all creatures but they all live and move and have their being in Him. In fact, according to the Vedas the vast universe is the body of God and all things, living and non-living, are parts of that body. The Bible has also said the same thing. "Just as there are many parts to our bodies, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of it, and it takes every one of us to make it complete, for we each have different work to do. So we belong to each other and each needs all the others."

This can be brought home by some well-known facts of science. The carbonic acid gas we breathe out during respiration is food for plants. Out of this gas they retain the carbon but release the oxygen. Animals take back this oxygen directly and the carbon, in the form of food stuffs, again into their bodies. Likewise the food we eat is partly absorbed, but what is eliminated reappears in various forms of vegetation and again enters the bodies of men and animals as food. In short, our bodies are continually dissolving into the bodies of others. This constant interchange of matter among the earth, the air, plants, animals and men, keeps life going and shows that the bodies of all creatures are closely related and form a unity.

Similarly it can be shown that all minds are essentially one, as are also all souls. So this body, this mind, this spirit, which we love to call 'mine', really belongs to many —in fact, to each and all.

In the Gita Sri Krishna says, "He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, of him will I never lose hold and he shall never lose hold of Me." This lesson was strongly emphasised in the vision of the Cosmic Form of the Lord. Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, "Behold the whole universe, with the moving and the unmoving and whatever else thou desirest to see, all unified in My Body." Describing the actual scene, Sanjay told King Dhritarashtra, "There, in the body of the God of gods, Arjuna beheld the whole universe with its many divisions, all gathered together in one." Again, addressing the Cosmic Form Arjuna said:

"Within Thy form, O God, the gods I see,
All grades of beings with distinctive marks,"

and finally added, "Supreme receptacle of all that lives; in Thy vast form the universe is spread." Of course, all creatures are contained in the body of God not like pebbles in a pot but like cells and organs in a living body; in other words, they are interconnected and interdependent.

This great philosophic idea has its scientific counterparts. For example, Sir James Jeans writes in his book *Physics and Philosophy*: "When we view ourselves in space and time, our consciousnesses are obviously the separate individuals of a particle picture, but when we pass beyond space and time, they may perhaps form ingredients of a single continuous stream of life. As it is with light and electricity, so it may be with life; the phenomena may be individuals carrying on separate existences in space and time, while in the deeper reality beyond space and time we may all be members of one body." How close does scientist Jeans come to Arjuna's vision of the Cosmic Form of the Lord!

Fairfield Osborn, in his foreword to *The Web of Life*, writes, "The most basic truth regarding our earth home is that all living things, in some manner, are related to each other. This fact, while mainly important as a physical principle, carries implications even of a spiritual nature."

George Gaylord Simpson, a leading palaeontologist, states, "Life and its environment are interdependent and evolve together." Bentley Glass, eminent biologist, has said the same thing in his book *Science and Ethical Values*. "Seen broadly, all life is inter-knit and mutually interdependent." "With many details still and stimulatively lacking," writes Warren Weaver, scientist-statesman, in his book *Science and Imagination*, "the evidence is overwhelming that all living creatures are kin... The diversity, however, is a surface phenomenon; when one looks underneath and within, the universal unity again becomes apparent."

Emerson, who was a lover of God as well as the Gita, puts this thought beautifully. "Of the universal mind each individual man is one more incarnation... Every chemical substance, every plant, every animal in its growth, teaches the unity of cause, the variety of appearance...the heart in thee is the heart of all; not a valve, not a wall, not an inter-section is there anywhere in nature, but one blood rolls uninterruptedly in endless circulation through all men, as the water of the globe is all one sea, and, truly seen, its tide is one... The heart and soul of all men being one, this bitterness of His and Mine ceases. His is mine. I am my brother, and my brother is me. If I feel overshadowed and outdone by great neighbours, I can yet love, I can still receive; and he that loveth maketh his own the grandeur he loves."

As soon as we accept this relation with God and with fellow creatures, the essentials of a rational, scientific and universal religion become self-evident. As God fills the earth and is all things, the world is not a vale of tears but is essentially divine, holy and auspicious. It is His temple, empire and playground, His constant concern, His love and delight. All the work necessary or useful for the world is God's own work; and this includes not only prayer and meditation, religion and philosophy, but also science and technology, art and literature, agriculture and industry, state-craft and defence.

We are not only children and devotees of God but also employees of his government. By doing our duties properly we worship the Lord. Upto a point competition and struggle are necessary for our development, but love and cooperation are a higher law of life, which, if we are to advance spiritually, has progressively to replace the lower law. A devotee of God will love not only the God in far away heaven but also his nearby manifestations—the world and its inhabitants. He also worships the Lord who joyfully strives for the good of his creatures.

CHAPTER 6

THE QUALITIES OF GOD

Believers in God with wrong notions about Him have done far greater damage to humanity and to the cause of religion than doubters and non-believers. Belief in God can be dangerous unless accompanied by a proper understanding of His qualities and functions.

To explain the presence of the universe we postulate a Creator and Ruler, generally called God. All religions agree in depicting Him as a supernatural Being who is perfect, immortal, eternal and self-existing. In addition, He is described as omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. It would have been quite easy to deduce from these properties the essentials of a sound and useful religion. But, unfortunately, some religious leaders vying with one another for a clientele, have brought God down to the human or subhuman level and made him a tool of man's evil propensities.

Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Infinite

If God is omnipresent, he must be present in every atom and cell, in every star and planet, in empty space, in saint as well as sinner. Logically it means that God fills everything and is all things. The earth is His temple, abode and work place. He may be found not only in the sublime solitude of heaven—but even more fruitfully and easily in the din and bustle of the world, in the form of the great and the good, of those who help us and those who need our help.

If God is omnipotent, it is interesting to enquire what fraction of his powers He actually employs in creating and running this entire show. Obviously, a negligible part, and infinitesimal fraction of infinite power is sufficient to meet all these vast demands. Though according to human standards He must be spending an enormous amount of energy, actually, since He possesses infinite power and wisdom His work entails no effort and He may well be regarded as absolute, quiescent and actionless.

There is another related question. Since God is infinite in all respects, how much time, labour and skill would be required by man, with his limited powers, to reach Him? The answer is obtained mathematically by dividing infinity by a finite quantity and is therefore infinite time, infinite labour, infinite skill. Since man cannot fulfil this condition, he can by his own efforts, only come close to God, like an asymptote continually approaching but never meeting its curve. But the infinite power, who can do anything, can easily meet the finite. For this reason it is said that God can be attained only by those to whom He reveals Himself.

It also follows that it is idle to expect that any one, simply because he is a great scientist, statesman or lawyer, can comprehend God or speak about Him authoritatively without long and painstaking preparation. Moreover, God is not just power or intelligence but also truth, love, goodness and harmony. Therefore He can be known and attained only when man cultivates such qualities and his hands and feet, head and heart, reason and faith, are all employed in God's quest, as the Vedas taught. "This Atman cannot be attained by study or by intellect or even by vast reading. It is gainde by him alone who *whole-heartedly* seeks for It. To such an aspirant the Self reveals Its own nature."

Since God is omnipotent must He be autocratic, arbitrary and capricious like an earthly king? Would Infinite Power and Infinite Wisdom be running about here and there, deciding and directing everythig personally, leaving no discretion to His creatures; or would He work through fixed rules and procedures keeping the minimum of supervisory functions to Himself and delegating widely to those who are actually required to handle the work? If God is perfect, do we expect him to mete out reward and punishment with an even hand or to be partial to those who profess to belong to His chosen religion or chosen race? Would He seek glory by enforcing the laws He Himself has made or by condoning their infractions? Would He like to show off His authority like an ordinary human being?

Mixture of Opposites

God is our ideal of perfection. By lowering this ideal in order to popularise themselves religions have opened the door to all kinds of wickedness. The believers are given a licence to a gay life here and hereafter; the non-believers are condemned to eternal perdition. God has been made the chief patron of villains, rogues and tyrants belonging to His own favourite religion.

God is said to be beyond the senses. The senses act through the powers derived from Him but cannot perceive Him.

As God is infinite knowledge and wisdom, the human intelligence is too feeble to comprehend Him. Therefore it is said that God is beyond reason and intelligence. This means, among other things, that God is not subject to the laws of mathematics, which represent reason in some of its simplest forms. He cannot be increased by any process of addition or multiplication, nor diminished by subtraction or division. A famous verse of the Upanishads says, "That is perfect. This is perfect. From the Perfect, is the Perfect born. Taking the Perfect from the Perfect, verily the Perfect remains"., The birth or death of creatures, the evolution or involution of galaxies, any events occurring in the world, does not produce the slightest change in God.

Another implication of God being beyond reason is that He and His activities are not governed by the law of cause and effect. The question why He created the universe or why He permits evil in this world is not admissible. This, however, does not mean that God is irrational or erratic.

God is too great and too subtle to be grasped at once or in His entirety. He can only be consdiered in parts, one aspect at a time, just as we study separately, the size, shape, colour, and other properties of a material object. Corresponding to each of God's aspects we get a separate picture, which represents Him only partially and imperfectly. Some of these pictures appear mutually exclusive. For example, in one of his aspects God is undoubtedly absolute, pure spirit, impersonal and inactive, as we cannot perceive him in the world even with the most sophisticated of scientific instruments. Yet as the Creator and Ruler of the world He must be personal and ever at work. Similarly He must be both immanent and transcendent, infinite and infinitesimal, formless and with an infinity of forms.

Thus in many respects God is a mixture of opposites. Hinduism recognises these facts and tries to incorporate them all in the single concept of Purushottama, the Person Supreme, Divine, the true and highest Godhead, who is personal as well as impersonal and higher than either and both of them. Likewise He includes and surpasses both matter and spirit, absolute and relative, quiescent and active, manifest and unmanifest, Purusha and Prakriti.

Manifest and Unmanifest God

To say that the universe has an existence independent and outside of God would set up two parallel governments and drastically curtail God's powers. Logically, therefore we have to accept that the universe is a projection of God, the body of the Supreme Spirit, and all creatures are His manifestations. Scientific facts and theories are all pointing to this conclusion.

The manifest universe is an aspect of God which is of great practical importance but is generally neglected. Conventional worship, prayer and meditation are suitable for the unmanifest God, the Father in heaven, but are inappropriate for worshipping the Manifest God. Worship of the Manifest requires loving service of fellow creatures.

In the Gita Sri Krishna has categorically asserted that it is best to worship the Manifest God. The pursuit of the Unmanifest through the common forms of adoration is also a true path but much more difficult and less productive. It links only the mind to the Unmanifest but leaves large parts of the human personality uncultivated. Moreover, the attainment of the Unmanifest is inferior to the attainment of the Supreme Lord, who is not merely Unmanifest but also includes the Manifest. He who worships the Manifest God has to use his entire being—hands and feet, head and heart—in the service of living creatures. He, therefore, develops and rounds off his whole personality and at the same time also promotes the welfare of the community in which he lives. In his *Essays on the Gita,* Sri Aurobindo writes: "The supreme faith is that which sees God in all; to its eye the manifestation and non-manifestation are one Godhead. The perfect union is that which meets the Divine at every moment in every action."

The Gita has laid very great stress on the worship of the Manifest God and taught this lesson in many ways. The aspirant is required to work efficiently but selflessly, for the welfare of the world and as an example to others. He is to perform all his works as Yajna or sacrifice. He is to rejoice in doing good to all creatures. He is to share his acquisitions with those less fortunate than himself. He is to see and worship the Lord present in all creatures; and he who does this abides in God even though engaged in all forms of activities.

God is a crucial factor in religion. Only a religion that has a correct appreciation of the nature of God can meet the spiritual needs of humanity. Before religion can remake the world it must remake its God, and this is a task which requires not only deep faith but great wisdom and vision.

CHAPTER 7

THE DOCTRINE OF PRAKRITI

Two Aspects of Divinity

In the remote past the sages of India enunciated many important philosophical principles. Their scientific counterparts, discovered only recently and established in the world of matter, have imparted to them a new significance and universality. One momentous example is the doctrine of Prakriti.

Normally we regard God as a unity—as Creator and Ruler of the Universe, as Father, Mother and Friend of all creatures, who personally controls everything in the world. But by close observation and deep reflection Indian seers found that many phenomena of nature, like sunrise and sunset, seasons, tides and phases of the moon, occur with predictable regularity and show no evidence of interference by supernatural beings. Accordingly they found it necessary to postulate two distinct but related and complementary aspects of God namely Purusha (Person) and Prakriti (Nature or Matter). Purusha is Person or Spirit and possesses intelligence and feeling. Prakriti, as the complement of Purusha, is impersonal and its distinguishing characteristic is that it is *Jada,* that is to say, inert, devoid of both feeling and intelligence.

Paradoxical as it may seem, Purusha, though a person, is a mere spectator, at best an overseer, who does nothing, while the insentient, heartless and brainless Prakriti creates and sustains the universe on His behalf. The Gita says: "Though the author of this universe, know Me, the immortal

Lord, to be a non-doer. (IV/13). With Me as supervisor, Nature (Prakriti) brings forth the whole creation, both animate and inanimate; it is due to this cause that the wheel of Sansar is revolving. (IX/10) He really sees who sees all actions being done in all respects only by Nature and the Self as the non-doer." (XIII/29).

Prakriti is sometimes explained as the Divine Mother of the universe (with Purusha as Father) and sometimes as Maya, the illusive or delusive power of God, which hides Him from us, makes the One appear as many and shrouds the workings of Nature in deep mystery. Both these interpretations account for certain well-known facts of life. But the most rewarding explanation is that briefly hinted in the Gita and clarified by science: Prakriti is the cause of the generation of causes and effects (XIII/21). It is Energy—Law—System which rules and runs the universe. The Energy is that of God, which is present everywhere, here latent, there manifest, producing great results from small causes, which is all-powerful and ever at work and yet bound by laws made by God, which are fixed, universal, eternal and self-acting. The forms of energy are numerous. The laws of nature are legion; and the laws of health are different from those of wealth, of flying different from those of navigation.

The best of man-made machines require an external source of energy and constant supervision. But the vast machine which God has made is so perfect and its energy supply so inexhaustible that it runs smoothly and automatically without requiring any day-to-day attention or direction from Him. This arrangement alone makes rational science and rational religion possible. It has introduced order where, without it, there would have been only chaos and confusion. This, again, is the only arrangement worthy of a perfect Being who possesses infinite power and infinite wisdom and does not act like a petty official running hither and thither to assert and show off his authority and direct everything personally. Man is not required to overcome the will of God, which in any case would have been impossible, but only to discover and obey the laws of Nature; and if he does so, his well-being is assured.

The distinction between Purusha and Prakriti has been emphasised in our scriptures in another way. Broadly speaking, Vidya or Brahma Vidya is knowledge of the Spirit, while A-Vidya is knowledge other than spiritual, that is to say, knowledge of Prakriti or secular knowledge. A-Vidya and Vidya are not contradictory but complementary. Both are necessary for the well-being of man; the former for living happily in the world and the latter for going beyond. Those who care only for the former grope in darkness; but in still deeper darkness are those whose interests are limited to the knowledge of God.

It is to be particularly noted that the authority that judges, rewards and punishes human actions is not Purusha, the Person, but Prakriti, which, being inanimate, is impervious to prayers, petitions, gifts as well as threats. The Gita declares: "The Lord determines not the doership nor the doing of beings, nor even their contact with the fruit of actions. It is Nature (Prakriti) that performs these functions." (V/14).

In short, the results of a man's actions are determined by fixed laws and are, therefore, automatic and inexorable, but can be reinforced, modified or cancelled by his own further actions. Success and happiness in the world are best obtained by taking appropriate steps in accordance with the laws of nature rather than by a mere appeal to Purusha through prayer, meditation and worship. He who has grasped the respective roles of Purusha and Prakriti and acts accordingly in daily life attains salvation. For says the Gita, "He who thus knows Purusha and Prakriti with its threefold qualities, even though engaged in all sorts of activities, is not born again" (XIII/23).

The Laws of Nature

For centuries science made little progress because of the belief that the universe is governed in every detail by Divine Will which is variable and unknowable and against which human intelligence and effort are of no avail. Later on, when it was realised that gods, angels and spirits do not interfere in the workings of Nature, one great obstacle to the systematic study of nature was removed and two basic postulates of science emerged. The first is that events do not take place without a preceding cause, that something cannot come out of nothing. Whatever it may be—an eclipse, a rainbow, a strange animal, a thought or a feeling —does not come from nothing but must have a cause. It may be easy or difficult to correlate cause and effect, but neither can exist without the other.

The second postulate is that of the Uniformity of Nature. Nature is uniform and orderly. Not only do things and events have a cause, but the same cause, under similar conditions, produces the same effect. The properties of matter are invariable, and what has happened once will happen again when conditions are the same. If nature were erratic or inconsistent, science and even the management of life would be impossible, for there would be no laws to discover or guide us and everything would be enveloped in a cloud of uncertainty. The amazing success of science is based on these fundamental assumptions and is positive proof of their validity.

The laws of nature are different from man-made laws. The latter vary from country to country and even in the same country they are revised from time to time. Keep to the left, says the English law; keep to the right, says the American. The punishment for the breach of human laws is not automatic. Many escape penalty because they are never caught; while the high and mighty can even bend the law to suit themselves. But the laws of nature are eternal, immutable, universal, impersonal and inexorable. The punishment for their breach is automatic and generally comes silently and without any warning. Nature is friendly to those who cooperate with its laws; but crushes and annihilates those who constantly violate them.

It will be seen that the Law of Causation, which according to scientists holds sway in the world of matter, is the same as the Law of Karma, which Hindus apply to the world of the spirit. The Law of Karma, again, is only a corollary to the Doctrine of Prakriti, which covers both the physical and moral sides of life.

It is a pity that the Hindus who discovered the doctrine of Prakriti ages back, did not use it to unravel the mysteries of physical nature and the westerners who have so successfully applied it for this purpose, are reluctant to extend it to the moral and spiritual world. Had it been otherwise, the history of the world would have been different.

Modern Western Thought

Increasingly, thinkers all over the world—scientists, philosophers and even theologians—are coming round to the view that God does not work by personal fiat but through fixed laws, which are universal, consistent and discoverable. Thus, according to Emerson, the universe is ruled not so much by a superhuman power as by the immanent divinity in things, which works according to laws.

"These laws", he said, "execute themselves. They are out of time, out of space and not subject to circumstances... the world is begirt with deity and with law." "It is only when we discern", writes Lord Samuel in his book *Belief and Action*, "in nature itself the reign of law, and in the law the hand of God, that we may see a divine splendour in the natural world that is about us, and may open an access to what lies beyond."

Fulton Oursler writes in his book *The Precious Secret*: "God not only made the laws; he abides by them. It is not nature that is incoherent but man who is ignorant; he has still a long way to go... If this were not so, we would not have laws at all but only caprice." Max Born, who won the Nobel Prize for his work in physics, writes in his book *The Restless Universe*: "Truth is what the scientist aims at. He finds nothing at rest, nothing enduring in the world. Not everything is knowable, still less is predictable. But the mind of man is capable of grasping and understanding at least a part of Creation: amid the flight of phenomena stands the immutable pole of law."

Emphasising the shift from the will of God to law and system, the famous psychologist William James wrote in his book *Varieties of Religious Experience*: "Science, on the other hand, has ended by utterly repudiating the personal point of view... The books of natural theology which satisfied the intellects of our grandfathers seem to us quite grotesque, representing, as they did, a God who conformed the largest of things of nature to the paltriest of our private works. The God whom science recognises must be a God of universal laws exclusively, a God who does a wholesale, not a retail business. He cannot accommodate his processes to the convenience of individuals."

Similarly G. R. Harrison says in his book *What Man May Be*: "When one studies the picture of evolution...

as nature tried first one experiment and then a million others... one sees then a Creator that provided the impulse and impetus, order and a guiding law, and then left the development... to the unfolding of this law. Yet what do we mean here by 'leaving', for the order and impetus are everywhere, and the scientist, like the mystic, can, if he will, see the hand and face of God, in every act and creature. Most religious people find it entirely acceptable now-a-days to believe that God set up a system in which organic evolution was then able to take place."

Identical views were expressed by Thomas Huxley, well-known scientist and friend and defender of Darwin. "The life, the fortune and the happiness of every one of us depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and complicated than chess. The chessboard is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that His play is always just, fair and patient. But we also know to our cost that He never overlooks a mistake or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well the highest stakes are paid, with the sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated —without haste but without remorse. What I mean by education is learning the rules of this mighty game."

There can be no inconsistency between the Maker of laws and the laws He has made. We cannot worship Him without obeying His laws In fact, obedience is only a form, and very often the best form, of adoration.

The Qualities of Nature

One remarkable feature of Prakriti is that it is characterised by three Gunas or qualities, namely Sattva (Harmony, Light or Purity), Rajas (Motion, Passion or Activity) and Tamas (Darkness, Inertia or Delusion). At a given time any one of the qualities may be predominant while the other two are more or less dormant. But no creature, not even gods, can be altogether free from these qualities. Penetrating every nook and corner of the universe, they may lie concealed in the innermost recesses of the human heart. Says the Gita: "There is no existence here on earth, in the heavens or among the celestials, or anywhere else in creation, which is free from these three qualities born of Matter." (XVIII/40).

All human actions are coloured by one or other of these qualities whether openly or secretly. The author of the Gita has taken great pains to emphasise the all-pervasiveness of the Gunas. Many actions such as Yajna, Tapas and Dana, and acquisitions like knowledge, which are commonly believed to be wholly good and unmixed blessings, may be either Sattvica or Rajasica or Tamasica, depending on the motives which prompt them and the use to which their fruits are put. Tapasya, which includes worship, japa and meditation, has been classified by Sri Krishna into three grades. "The threefold austerity (of body, speech and mind) performed with supreme faith and without desire for fruit, is said to be Sattvica. The penance which is performed with the object of winning respect, honour and worship and for ostentation, which is unstable and transitory, is said to be Rajasic. The austerity done under a deluded undertsanding, with torture to the mind, senses and body, or with the object of causing injury to another, is said to be Tamasic." (XVII/17-19).

The popular belief is that devotees of God are always pure and purifying like the Ganga. But in the *Bhagavata* Sri Krishna, speaking to Uddhava, divided them into three grades. "When a man or woman worships Me with great devotion and does his duties without any selfish motive, he or she should be known as possessed of Sattvica nature. When they worship Me for the attainment of their desires, for the sake of wealth and blessings, they should be known as possessed of Rajasica nature; and if they worship Me in order to do injury to others, they are of Tamasica nature."

Similarly it is said that faith is the direct way to God and the panacea for all human ills. But according to the Gita (XVII/2-6), even faith shows the same three shades. The classical examples are. Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana, whose faith was Rajasica, Tamasica and Sattvica respectively. By long years of Tapasya Ravana and Kumbhakarna acquired very intimate relationship with God, yet that relationship was essentially fiendish, as seen from their subsequent conduct and character.

Prakriti is not to be confused with Mammon or Devil. Mammon is a person, Prakriti is impersonal. Mammon is the temper and corrupter of men and enemy of God. Prakriti neither tempts men nor opposes God. It is God's own energy and its manifestation in matter and life. It is God's own will expressed in permanent laws and systems. Mammon is wholly evil, but Prakriti is good, evil and mixed. Though Parkriti is a mixture of three qualities, man is free to choose any of them as the motive force for his actions; and the whole course of religious discipline consists in making this choice wisely at every step in life so as to make oneself, one's motives and actions more and more Sattvica.

Lessons of Prakriti

The doctrine of Prakriti, like any scientific theory, serves a double purpose. It accounts for things as they actually occur in the world and it is a useful guide to future action. It explains why in vast areas of the universe only the reign of law is seen and not the hand of the Ruler. Further, by pinpointing the exact cause of an event it enables us to bring about or prevent that event according to our choice. The world of Prakriti in which our days are passed requires education, science and technology; reason instead of blind faith; observation, study and reflection rather than mere revelation. Above all, the doctrine of Prakriti teaches that natural results in the world should be obtained by natural means, by right conduct, by proper performance of all duties.

The means must not only be natural but must also be adapted to the particular end in view. The means are as various as the ends, and there is no single or universal means to secure all ends. The seeds and methods for growing gram will never yield cotton; and there are different medicines for smallpox and malaria. This is one of the precious lessons of the doctrine of Prakriti and Maharshi Vyasa has laid great stress on it through a remarkable anecdote in the *Mahabharata.*

Yavakrida, son of Bharadwaja, undertook hard penance to gain the grace of Indra. When Indra appeared, Yavakrida told him: "I wish to be more learned in the Vedas than any one has ever been before. It takes a long time and involves much hardship to learn the Vedas from a teacher. I am practising austerities to acquire this knowledge directly".

Indra smiled and said, "You are on the wrong path. Return home, seek a proper preceptor and learn the Vedas from him. Austerity is not the way to learning; the path is study and study alone." But Yavakrida would not give up. Indra again manifested himself and warned him. "You have taken the wrong path to knowledge. You can acquire knowledge only by study." Yavakrida did not heed even this warning but continued his penance. Finally, Indra, out of compassion, granted him this boon. "Go and study the Vedas; you will become learned."

Yavakrida studied the Vedas and became learned. He grew vain with the thought that he had acquired the knowledge of the Vedas through the boon of Indra and not through human tutelage. His father Bharadwaja did not like it and warned him: "The gods grant boons to foolish people who persistently practise penance, as intoxicants are sold to fools for money. They lead to loss of self-control and this leads to the warping of the mind and utter destruction. Be not ruined by vanity. Cultivate self-restraint. Do not transgress the limits of good conduct." Inspite of this warning Yavakrida took to bad ways and eventually met with an ignominious death on account of his felony. (*Mahabharata*: Rajagopalachari).

It is clear that neither penance nor the visions or boon granted by Indra could make Yavakrida wise or virtuous.

The *Ramayana* too has narrated an incident which brings out the need for adopting natural means to accomplish things in the world of nature. The army of monkeys and bears is at the seashore and the problem is how to cross the sea to Lanka. On the advice of Vibhishana, Sri Rama prayed to the Ocean-god for three days. As there was no response, Sri Rama, following the suggestion of Lakshmana, took up his bow to dry up the sea with a missile of fire. Thereupon the god of the sea appeared and explained: "Dear Ramachandra! Earth, air, ether, water and fire—these five elements must follow the eternal laws of their nature. Tempted by pleasure or reward or frightened of punishment, can I ever swerve from my nature? Can water harden and become stone? Or can I reduce my depths into a shallow pond for your easy crossing?"

Commenting on this episode, Rajagopalachari writes in his *Ramayana*: "Valmiki puts into the mouth of the Ocean-god a fundamental of our religious philosophy. He explains the primordial relationship between God and Nature. God's law operates in and through Nature. The laws of nature were created so that the universe may proceed by itself. So too is the Law of Karma. The five elements, all objects without life as well as all living creatures must follow their own permanent laws. Accordng to the Hindu Shastras, Nature herself, the sequence and chain of cause and effect, the properties of matter, and the Law of Karma, are all ordained permanently by God. Nature itself is witness to God; He is not proved by a suspension of the laws of nature."

These stories teach several important lessons. Transport, food, clothing and other necessities of life must be obtained by natural means and not by prayer, meditation or supernatural powers. Further, there are different ways for obtaining different things and a devotee is not necessarily a good scientist, a skilful farmer or even a man of wisdom. For acquiring knowledge, wisdom or virtue, or even the common necessities of life, the appropriate natural, common-sense and well-tried methods should be adopted, instead of relying solely or largely on prayer and meditation.

For many years we have hoped to make men wise, pure and good by supernatural means—by miracles and mysticism and by appealing to Purusha through prayer and meditation, faith and devotion—but without success. Let us now vary the strategy and concentrate on natural means to make men good and pure, diligent and peaceful, loving and helpful. We are surrounded by Prakriti on all sides and our way to God invariably lies through the world of matter Let us recognise both Purusha and Prakriti and give them each what is rightly their due.

The Law of Disorder

Another noteworthy characteristic of Prakriti is that it is always in a state of flux or change and the direction of spontaneous changes is always downhill, towards more and more disorder, towards disharmony, discord, evil, darkness and inertia.

There is an important principle of physics known as the Second Law of Thermodynamics, according to which heat always flows from hot to cold, that is, in the direction which increase the overall disorder or randomness of the system. In a wider sense, this law applies to all the workings of nature and may more simply be called the Law of Disorder. It means that the universe has a built-in tendency to discord, disorganisation, decay and disintegration. In the words of Bertrand Russell, this law states, roughly speaking, that things left to themselves tend to get into a muddle and do not tidy themselves up again. According to biologist J.A.V. Butler, "The direction in which spontaneous processes occur is always downhill; energy always becomes more dissipated; materials always pass from more organised states to more mixed-up states."

Many examples of the operation of this law may be seen in daily life. Much skill and effort are needed to grow wheat or cauliflowers but weeds, thorns and thistles just spring up as if from nowhere. Mind-wandering is the natural condition, concentration requires will power. Going up is toilsome; going down, automatic. Any organism, if it is to be kept in a state of fitness, regularly needs at least two things: assimilation of fresh food and elimination of waste products. All human families, societies and organisations naturally tend to disharmony, indiscipline and inefficiency, which can be overcome only by constant vigilance, control and direction.

This law has several applications in the sphere of religion.

As a corollary, intelligent effort must be used if it is desired to accomplish anything worth while or to create beauty or order anywhere in the world. And wherever we find order, progress, harmony, beauty, cooperation or development, it is obviously due to an intelligent force, whether working internally or externally. As the universe and all living creatures, specially human beings, exhibit these properties, we may be sure that the former is master-minded by a Supreme Intelligence, while every living creature has a spark of that Intelligence and Power, which, consciously or unconsciously, directs the life processes and activities of the individual.

Some religions firmly believe that having been created perfect by God himself or his chosen prophet, they will remain so for ever. The truth, however, is that religion, being a human institution, is as much subject to this law as a school, office or factory. With the passage of time the spurious or worn-out coins of religion drive out the genuine ones from circulation, the minor injunctions supersede the major ones and even excellent principles harden into rigid and lifeless dogmas. This is how faith or belief overrides reason and action; worship, morality; individual salvation, collective good; and a religion whose highest tenet is to see and worship the Lord abiding in all creatures becomes haunted by casteism and untouchability.

Several distinguished thinkers have drawn attention to the decadence of religion in course of time and the consequent need for its regular spring-cleaning. Thus Millikan, Nobel Prize winner in physics, writes in his *Autobiography*, "In the course of its long evolution religion had all kinds of extraneous ideas associated with it or grafted upon it, some good, some very bad. It has meant and still means in some minds crude superstition, all kinds of man-made theologies, bigotry, intolerance, wars and inquisitions. None of these things are the essence of religion. It is necessary to get rid of all these excrescences and to get down to the essential things." Similar are the views of Arnold Toynbee. In his famous book *An Historian's Approach to Religion* he says, "In the life of all the higher religions the task of winnowing is a perennial one, because their historic harvest is not pure grain."

With remarkable insight the Gita draws attention to the ravages of time in the field of religion and suggests remedies. Now and then the entire structure of religion suffers grievously at the hands of the wicked; and whenever this happens, the Lord comes forth as an Avatar "for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil and for firmly establishing righteousness." (IV/7). Similarly, with the passage of time precious teachings of religion are sometimes forgotten; as an example Sri Krishna says, "By the great efflux of time this Yoga decayed in the world." (IV/3). Obviously, religion can be kept wholesome and unspoilt only if its precepts and practices are reviewed from time to time in the light of past experience and present knowledge.

Every individual, too, is subject to this law of nature. He can attain any kind of excellence only by exerting himself. "One should lift oneself up," says the Gita, "by one's own efforts and should not degrade oneself." (VI/5). Only by further and continued effort can he retain his purity, excellence or perfection, and this is true even if he is a yogi, a devotee, a man of knowledge or of action. This is why the Gita requires acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity to be performed at all events, for they are purifiers (even) of the wise. ((XVIII/5). No person, however great, can afford to rest on his laurels; for as soon as effort ceases, drift and degeneration set in.

Everywhere watchfulness is needed to save religion from relapsing into irreligion or even barbarism. Religious leaders, instead of acting like drain inspectors for other religions, should function as the legendary swan, leaving the water and picking out the milk not only from other religions but even from their own. This means selecting and playing up the teachings which are necessary and useful for all, which call upon every one to improve and develop himself, which promote goodwill and friendliness among individuals, among nations and, above all, among religions. It also means weeding out or playing down the dogmas which contradict reason or known facts, which lower human responsibility or divide mankind into warring camps in the name of God.

Accordingly, each religion should bring out new adaptations of its teachings to meet the requirements of different sections of society. In particular, there should be an export or world edition, for scientists, philosophers, thinkers, sceptics and intelligentsia generally, all over the world. Clearly, this task of religious reinterpretation requires seers who are gifted not only with faith and devotion but also with wisdom and vision.

Conclusion

The doctrine of Prakriti is one of the profoundest and most fruitful contributions of Hinduism to the philosophic thought of the world. The amazing success of science is proof of this doctrine and a promise that by applying it to the moral and spiritual sides of life humanity can be transformed.

To get anything worth while in the world of nature natural means must be adopted. Austerities, prayer and meditation are not the proper way to acquire knowledge, wisdom, virtue or the goods of life.

Nothing in creation is free from the three qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. The character, conduct, knowledge, faith and even devotion and meditation of a man cannot be taken at their face value but may be Sattvic, Rajasic or Tamasic, depending on his motives and what he does with his attainments and possessions.

Intelligent effort is required to improve things or keep them in a state of fitness. Even men of knowledge, yogis and devotees can remain in a condition of purity and piety only by continually giving themselves away through works of austerity, sacrifice and charity. Left to themselves, Sattva and Rajas tend to degenerate into Tamas.

The precepts and practices of religion need to be kept under constant review in order to weed out the undesirable accretions and distortions and highlight the important and useful parts.

The Gita has laid the greatest stress on the proper understanding of the doctrine of Prakriti. In two remarkable verses it says: "He really sees who sees all actions being done in all respects only by Prakriti and the Self as the non-doer. He who thus knows Purusha and Prakriti with its qualities, though engaged in all kinds of works, is not born again." (XIII/29,23).

Atheists deny Purusha; theists deny Prakriti and religious leaders, even in India, have not taken due notice of the division between Purusha and Prakriti; and this is one of the major causes of the decline of religion and the spiritual backwardness of mankind.

One obvious objection to this explanation is that if Purusha is only a silent witness and if Prakriti is not responsive to prayers, how can we account for the wonderful benefits which many people are known to have obtained through prayer and worship? Our present knowledge is not sufficient to answer this question. But it is noteworthy that not all prayers are heard. Perhaps there is a higher law, which we have yet to discover, governing the results of prayers. But, clearly, in the management of our life, we have to depend on our own efforts in accordance with the universal laws of nature rather than on the rare and uncertain exceptions to those laws obtained through appeals to superhuman agency. Moreover, the exaltation of Prakriti does not imply the belittling of Purusha. Both must be worshipped by appropriate methods.

The common man needs two kinds of worship: One by conventional methods like prayer and japa, the other by secular works. Proper union with God is possible only when worldly activities are performed as an adoration of the Lord, for his sake and pleasure and for the good of his creatures. Man's spiritual development requires not only prayer and meditation but also right conduct, proper performance of duties and obedience to the laws of nature—physical as well as moral. The Gita's injunction is: At all times remember Me and do your duty. A modern writer has said the same thing in different words: Work as if everything depends on you and pray as if everything depends on God.

CHAPTER 8

BODY, SOUL AND GOD

Body and soul together make the man. All major religions accept that a spark of Divinity vivifies the body and survives its death. Atheists, materialists and some scientists do not believe in the existence of souls, but their number is comparatively small.

Though belief in God and soul lies outside the purview of science, there is some factual evidence to support it.

Every thing in nature has an innate tendency to disorder and decay, and life can evolve only by overcoming this natural tendency. In every living creature, therefore, there must be a hidden force which opposes this natural tendency. At the time of death this force goes away, leaving the forces of decay in undisputed sway over the lifeless body, which begins to deteriorate very rapidly. The Second Law of Thermodynamics, therefore, points to the existence of a soul in each living creature and of God in the entire universe.

In deep sleep, the body, senses and the mind are resting, so there must be something else which keeps all our unscious physiological processes going, such as breathing, circulation of blood, digestion and growth. This hidden vital force is the soul, which is eternal, immortal, the source of all life, energy, activity, health and happiness in the body.

Parapsychologists have collected many authenticated cases of extra-sensory perception such as telepathy, apparitions, ectoplasm and communications with the dead. From the reality of these phenomena it follows that man possesses powers which can operate independently of his senses and there is something in him which outlives the body. The many verified examples of the recollection of the incidents of past lives support, on the one hand, the doctrine of immortal souls and, on the other, the theory of reincarnation.

Sir John Eccles, Nobel Prize winner in physiology, said, "I come to the concept of the soul and its special creation by God. I believe that there is a fundamental mystery in my existence transcending any biological account of the development of my body (including my brain)... And that being so, I must believe similarly for each one of you and for every human being."

In his book *An Approach to Modern Physics* Professor Andrade says, "If it is not considered trifling with serious subjects, we may find a rough analogy in the duplicate nature of man, spiritual or, if you prefer it, emotional, and material. For certain purposes an individual may be considered as entirely material; for transport in an aircraft he is just so much weight ... For other purposes, when, say, extreme examples of self-sacrifice are considered, weight and other material aspects are not very relevant. For ordinary purposes we have to consider the coexistence of the two aspects which, though necessary, are hard to reconcile...Emphasis and exact description with reference to one means a corresponding neglect and vagueness with respect to the other."

William McDougall, famous psychologist, gave several arguments in his book *Body and Mind* in support of the existence of souls. One of the most striking is his declaration that it is hardly conceivable that without the belief in immortality whole nations could rise to the level of an austere morality, or even maintain a decent standard of conduct. Hence he regards it as extremely desirable that psychology should furnish, if possible, scientific support for the belief in immortal souls.

Applying the pragmatic test, the postulate of immortal souls is better because it makes for a better society. When a man's interest and responsibility extend beyond death, he has to take a long view of things, balancing immediate and temporary gain with that which is deferred but lasting. On the other hand, if his responsibility ceases with the death of the body, there is no incentive for him to exercise self-restraint or deny himself any pleasures he can grab.

The Importance of the Body

Though the soul is the vital and most important element in man, yet for realizing its vast hidden potentialities it must have a strong and healthy body, equipped with a good intellect, well-trained mind and keen senses, which should all assist the soul and work under its direction. Spirituality is not possible without a proper material base.

The body is subject to temptation, disease and death. Its needs and desires are the cause of much hardship, pain and suffering. Nevertheless, it is not to be despised or neglected, for it is the indispensable vehicle or tenement of the soul. The body and the soul together constitute life, and since life is a gift of God, the body no less than the soul must be regarded as a blessing of God. Moreover, as the body is filled with God, it is wrong to regard it as evil, impure or unholy.

The body, which houses the soul, is not the source of its bondage but the instrument of its fulfilment and freedom. It is not the cause of a man's separation from God but the means of reunion with Him. Not by starving the body, not by suppressing the mind or the senses, but only by working through them and making the best use of them, may perfection and bliss be attained. The body should be properly looked after, trained and disciplined for the service of God and man.

"Lord, thou hast been very kind to me," says Tulsidas.

"For attaining perfection thou hast graciously given me a home—this human body, which is difficult even for gods to obtain."

"The body," says Dr. Jung, "means as little to us without the psyche as the latter without the body. The body lays claim to equal recognition . . . If we are still caught by the old idea of an antithesis between mind and matter, the present state of affairs means an unbearable contradiction; it may even divide us against ourselves."

In his book *East and West in Religion* Dr. Radhakrishnan writes: "The body is the temple of the spirit, the apparatus for spiritual growth. To regard the body or any part of it as indecent or vile is the sin of impiety. To treat it as cheap and vulgar is equally impious." In the words of Sadhu Vaswani, "We have long neglected our bodies . . . Build up your bodies. Develop your bodily vigour. Use it in the service of man, and you will be as the bright, gay grass—humble yet strong."

We must give the body its due, specially the bodies of those we love or who have dealings with us. The body is the gateway to the soul and whatever be the justification to belittle our own bodies, it would be most sinful to mete out ill-treatment to the bodies of fellow-men.

The souls are essentially one, ageless, sexless, neither father nor son, neither husband nor wife. It is the bodies that are different and give rise to various relationships in the world. Though these relationships are temporary and in a sense unreal like the roles assigned to the members of a dramatic party, every one is required to play his part as best he can. For the soul there is no school other than that of life. It is only by doing one's duty towards one another and towards society in general that a man can ever hope to ascend the spiritual ladder.

Partnership of God and Man

An important part of a man's personality is the ego. On account of it he regards himself as separate from the rest of the world as well as from God, although, as a matter of fact, he subsists in God and is closely related to all creatures. This feeling of 'I' and 'Mine' is necessary for the growth of the individual, but when carried to excess it becomes the root of all evil. Driven by the ego, man sets himself up in opposition to his fellow creatures. Much of the spiritual culture consists in thinning down this screen of selfishness, egoism and attachment until the same Lord is seen everywhere and in all creatures.

One fruitful view of the relationship between God and man regards them as partners in the business of maintaining and developing the world order—not only in prayer and meditation but also in the rough work essential for life. The scene at the beginning of the Gita—Sri Krishna driving the war chariot and Arjuna seated in it, bow and arrow in hand and ready to fight—represents the partnership between God and man and expresses the highest philosophy in a nutshell. Sri Krishna is Paramatma; Arjuna, Jivatma. The arrangement between them was that Arjuna would do all the fighting, while Sri Krishna would drive his chariot but would not take up arms at all during the course of the war. This is very briefly the true nature of the partnership between God and man. God's help and guidance are always available to man, but the fighting—that is to say, all the work pertaining to his station in life—has to be done by man himself and cannot be palmed off to God, Saviour or Guru. If a man does his best at all times and puts his trust in God, He will galdly act as his friend, philosopher and guide but every one must do his allotted work to the best of his ability.

Referring to the symbolic companionship of Krishna and Arjuna, Sri Aurobindo writes in his *Essays on the Gita*: "Arjuna and Krishna, this human and this divine, stand together not as seers in the peaceful hermitage of meditation, but as fighter and holder of the reins in the clamorous field, in the midst of the hurtling shafts, in the chariot of battle."

In his book *The Real Enjoyment of Living* H.J. Schachtel says: "To me one of the most rewarding concepts in the teaching of Judaism is the description of man as God's partner in working out our world's salvation ... We may call this cardinal teaching of Judaism the doctrine of supreme partnership, God and man, together, working as partners towards the thrilling goal of making this earth a province of the Kingdom of Heaven. Man is dignified by his status as a free agent. If he wants to, he can work with God. But he can also shun this divine partnership and invite down upon himself catastrophe and ruin."

A successful and happy life requires active cooperation between man and God, a combination of work and prayer—'At all times remember Me and fight.' We are co-labourers with God in his garden. He has willed to act through us and relies on us to do the specific work he has given each of us to do. But he forces nothing on us. He could, of course, remake the world in the twinkling of an eye, by his merest wish. But his plan is such that it requires our willing cooperation, and this is also necessary for our spiritual growth.

Essentially science is cooperation between man and nature; religion, between man and God. But both science and religion require cooperation between man and man.

CHAPTER 9

THE LAW OF KARMA AND THE THEORY OF REINCARNATION

Several points of agreement between Hinduism and science have already been mentioned, for example the common origin of all things in the universe, doctrine of Prakriti and the Law of Disorder.

Another common ground between Hinduism and science is the Law of Karma, whose scientific counterpart is the Law of Causation: like causes produce like effects. All the success of science is due to the fact that the universe is ruled by laws which are fixed and universal, which can be discovered and even predicted. From times immemorial the sages of India have recognised this principle in the moral world and called it the Law of Karma. It means that man is the architect of his own fate. Good deeds bring him good and bad deeds bad, results. He is free to choose between good and evil and is therefore accountable for his own actions. In the final analysis, his success, happiness and progress all depend on himself. In the Gita Sri Krishna advises that one should lift oneself up by one's own efforts and should not degrade oneself.

As a corollary to the Law of Karma, the effects of past actions can be strengthened, modified or even cancelled by present actions. Says the *Yoga Vasishtha*: "Our previous and present efforts, in case they are in contrary directions, are like two rams fighting against each other. The more powerful of the two always overcomes the other. Whether they are the past or the present efforts, it is the stronger one that determines our destiny. Man determines his own destiny by his own thought. He can also make those things happen which were not destined to happen. There is nothing in the world which cannot be achieved by man by right sort of efforts."

According to Christianity, faith in the Saviour, according to Islam, the will of God and according to Hinduism, the individual's own effort is the primary factor in shaping human destiny. Increasingly thinkers in the west too are coming round to accept the Law of Karma as a sound principle. Thus Alexis Carrel, Nobel Prize winner in medicine, says in his book *Reflections on Life*: "Thanks to our intelligence, we are free to act as we choose. We are, all the same, subject to the natural order of things. Since we are part of nature, we must conform to her laws, as Epictetus taught. In conducting one's life, as in driving a car, every mistake brings retribution. Those who transgress natural laws are annihilated by the mere play of the inherent mechanism of things."

In his Book *Gods and Men* Sir Richard Gregory, a noted scientist, said: "Though science may not be able to contribute much to the ultimate problem of spiritual beliefs, it does teach that every action carries with it a consequence —not in another world but in this—to be felt either by ourselves or in the generations to come. This is the law of the natural world and cannot be transgressed without punishment, whether by saint or sinner."

"Could the young," wrote William James, famous psychologist, "but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone."

"Cause and effect, means and end, seed and fruit," says Emerson, "cannot be severed, for the effect already blooms in the cause, the end pre-exists in the means, the fruit in the seed." Lord Samuel writes in his book *Belief* *and Action*: "The individual may not shift his responsibilities on to Destiny, nor yet on to God. Destiny is a figment, and the Divine element in the world, as Plato held, is not coercive but persuasive. If God were overtly active, constantly directing, man could be passive and nothing more. Because God is reticent, man has scope."

"Many religions," writes G.R. Harrison, in his book *What Man May Be*, "have a doctrine of Original Sin, considering all men as having been born evil... Man inevitably takes many wrong steps and can be viewed as steeped in sin, first innocently and later as a result of mixed or improper motives. Perhaps most closely related to a scientific view is the basic tenet in Hinduism and Buddhism, known as the Law of Karma, according to which all acts produce their results automatically, as effects follow causes. Punishment and reward...are merely the automatic feed-back reactions from a universe in which all parts are inter-related."

The Theory of Reincarnation

This is one direct result of the Law of Karma. According to this theory every soul, to complete its evolution from the finite to the infinite, requires a long time covering many lives, and has, therefore, to be born again and again until the goal is reached.

The purpose of life, whatever it may be, cannot be attained by those who die young; in fairness, they should have a further opportunity to grow and develop. Differences among children, mathematical and musical prodigies, uncanny memories, genius of any kind, would mean an erratic and unjust God; unless we attribute them to the individual's own actions in previous lives. Moreover, numerous cases are on record where children have given details of the incidents of their past lives which have been substantiated on enquiry. This direct evidence is proof of the existence of previous lives and, by inference, of future lives as well. For it is a fundamental postulate of science that what has happened once will, in similar circumstances, happen again.

Heredity explains some facts; but it does not explain why geniuses are born of ordinary parents or why wicked people are born of good parents. Reincarnation alone can account for all the facts of life in a rational and convincing manner.

Though very few people remember any thing of their past lives, this can be no valid objection to the doctrine of rebirth. For most of us have no recollection of the events of childhood or of our stay in our mother's body. But this does not mean that we did not pass through such phases. Even in this life we forget a great deal, and this is fortunate; for a photographic memory which keeps a permanent record of every thing would soon become a liability rather than an asset. It is a blessing of God that no one ordinarily remembers any thing of his past lives. Had it been otherwise, memories of past and present lives, the wrong done in previous lives by or to those who are now near and dear to us, would cause us no end of misery and confusion.

A galaxy of illustrious thinkers of the past believed in reincarnation: for example, Maeterlinck, Pythagoras, Virgil, Ovid and Plato. The famous Muslim saint, Jalaluddin Roomi, sang:

I died a mineral and became a plant;
I died a plant and rose an animal.
I died an animal and I was a man.
Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
Yet once more I shall die as man, to soar
With the blessed angels; but even from angelhood
I must pass on. All except God perishes.

Coming to recent times, we find the theory accepted by such luminaries as Goethe, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Hume, Spencer, Max Muller, Browning. Tennyson and Wordsworth.

J.A.V. Butler, noted biologist, has given a scientific reason for reincarnation. In his book *Inside the Living Cell* he says: "It seems to be a general experience that the ability to entertain new ideas and absorb new experiences diminishes with advancing age. Older people often find it difficult to adapt their thinking to new conditions and the new ideas of a new generation. The structure of their brains does not permit them to cast away all this now useless lumber and start again. The only way they could start again is by being reborn and starting with the brain of a new-born infant and learnig everything afresh in the new environment. This is exactly what occurs under the present conditions of human life."

John Eccles, Nobel Prize winner in physiology, writes in his book *Brain and the Unity of Conscious Experience*: "Just as I cannot give a scientific account of my origin...so I cannot believe that this wonderful divine gift of a conscious existence has no further future, no possibility of another existence under some other unimaginable conditions. At least I would maintain that this possibly of a future existence cannot be denied on scientific grounds." Henry Ford wrote: "The Gospel of Reincarnation is the essence of all knowledge...When I discovered Reincarnation, it was as if I had found a universal plan...There was time enough for me as for all my fellow-men to plan and create."

The Mystery of Death

Death is generally believed to be a very painful process. This, in fact, is one of the favourite arguments for escaping from the vicious circle of birth and death. This, however, is not the view of Sri Krishna. He has likened the soul's exit from a worn-out body and its entry into a new one to the discarding of old clothes and the putting on of new ones; in neither case need any pain or hardship be experienced. A man who lives nobly and does his best at all times is a happy man with a brave heart; he fears neither life nor death.

Change of body is necessary for the soul's progress. According to scientists death is a biological necessity. Thus, Bentley Glass, well-known biologist, writes in his book *Science and Ethical Values*: If living organisms lived for ever, there would long since have been no room in the globe for any new ones. Without the existence of new individuals on which to act, natural selection would not come into play, and evolution would never have occurred. Death is necessary for biological progress. Not only death but senescence and the limited life span have strong evolutionary value." J.A.V. Butler has said the same thing. "We must not suppose that increase of life span is necessarily desirable. If there were no death, there would not be any new individuals either. Unless there were a continual stream of new individuals, there could not be any evolution."

There is a popular belief in India that salvation means cessation of the cycle of birth and death. The underlying idea is that life is an unmitigated evil and liberation is not possible so long as a man is alive. This is a mistaken and harmful belief. It is contradicted by the instinct of self-preservation which is so strong in all living creatures. Man's constant striving is for more and better life and not for less. Surely the goal of religious pursuits cannot be the extinction of life. Since God created the earth and brought us here, it is blasphemous to regard life as unspiritual and escape from birth as the highest good. What is required is salvation, liberation or perfection here and now and not after death.

A man will be no better just after death than he was during his lifetime; and automatic salvation after death is a delusion.

A man seeking perfection is reborn so that he may develop himself. But even a perfect being, who needs nothing for himself, may have to take birth in order to guide others by precept and example. People are right in trying for the preservation and betterment of life; but the question of rebirth is best left in the hands of the wise and loving Father and Friend of all creatures.

CHAPTER 10

YOGA OR UNION WITH GOD

The word 'yoga' is generally taken as synonymous with specialized physical or mental exercises. This type of yoga is becoming quite popular even in the west.

But this term 'yoga' is also used to mean union or association with God and any path or means to such union or any circumstance that prompts a man to seek such union. This is the sense in which it has been used in the Gita and this is the sense in which it will be used here.

Sri Aurobindo's explanation of the word 'yoga' is illuminating. In his *Essays on the Gita,* he says: "Oneness with God, onenesss with all beings, the realisation of the eternal divine unity everywhere and the drawing onwards of men towards that oneness are the law of life which arises from the teachings of the Gita... To be made one self with God above and God in man and God in the world is the sense of liberation and the secret of perfection."

The idea of establishing union with God finds an echo all over the world. Thus O. S. Marden writes in *The Miracle of Right Thought*: "Just in proportion as we realise this oneness with the Divine, this at-one-ment with our Maker, do our lives become calm, confident, creative... All our troubles come from our sense of separateness from the Infinite source... This is the secret of all healing, of all health, prosperity and happiness, *the conscious union with the Divine.*" In his book, *In Tune with the Infinite,* R. W. Trine says: "We can bring our minds into rapport, into such harmony and connection with the Infinite Divine Power, that it speaks to us, directs us, and therefore acts through us as our own very selves. Through this connection, we become illumined by Divine wisdom and we become energised by Divine Power."

According to Arnold Toynbee, there is a universal urge in man for union or fellowship with God. In his book *An Historian's Approach to Religion,* he writes, "Man's goal is to seek communion with the Presence behind the phenomena, and to seek it with the aim of bringing his self into harmony with this *Absolute Reality.*"

Constant Yoga

What the Gita teaches, however, is not simply yoga but *Satata* Yoga or *Nitya* Yoga, that is to say whole time and not part-time, integral and not partial, union with God. For example Sri Krishna enjoins in the Gita: 'Therefore *at all times* think upon Me only and fight." Mentally renouncing all deeds to Me, having Me as the highest goal, resorting to Buddhi Yoga, do you *ever* fix your mind on Me." In other words, the union with God should not be confined to moments of prayer and meditation, but should be a constant, unbroken, conscious or sub-conscious feeling.

Moreover, this fellowship with God should be made with one's entire being—the hands, the senses, the head, the heart and the soul—and not merely with just a fragment of one's personality such as the elusive *Manas,* which is the usual practice. Similarly it is not good enough to make a connection simply with the quiescent and unmanifest aspects of God. Every effort should be made to establish union with the whole of God, specially his active and manifest aspects, which are generally neglected.

We are all too familiar with examples of people who practise partial or part-time yoga, who devote a short while daily to religious practices but the rest of the time to anti-social or immoral activities. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa has very aptly described the state of such people: "A fly sits now on sacramental food and next on filth. But the case of the bee is different. It sits on a blossom or on a hive and nowhere else. The worldly-minded Sadhakas are like the house fly and the Paramahansas like the bee. The former are occasionally devoted and the latter ever devoted to the Lord."

"That is, after all, the essential," writes Sri Aurobindo in his *Essays on the Gita* "to make the whole being one with the Divine, so entirely and in all ways one as to be naturally and constantly fixed in union, and thus to make all living —not only thought and meditation but action, labour, battle —a remembering of God. 'Remember ME and fight' means not to lose the ever present thought of the Eternal for one single moment in the clash of the temporal, which normally absorbs our mind."

Explaining the principle of *Nitya* Yoga, Vinoba Bhave writes in his *Talks on the Gita*: 'It is good that we worship God for half an hour now and then... We should not give up such habits. But the *Gita* is not satisfied with them. All our actions from morning till night should become worship of the Lord. Bathing, eating or sweeping, we should think of the Lord. While sweeping we should have the *bhavana,* the attitude, that we are cleaning the courtyard of the Lord, the master of our life... To a king of scriptures like the *Gita,* a half hour *puja* yields no satisfaction. Its keen desire is that the whole of life should be filled with the Lord and be a form of worship."

Thinkers even in the west are coming to realise the cogency of Constant Yoga. For example, in his book *Matter, Life, Mind and God,* R. F. A. Hoernle, Professor of Philosophy, writes: "Religion, whatever else it may be, is not departmental. It claims to control and pervade the whole of life. It is not an affair of special moods or exceptional moments. It is not intended to be shelved on week days and exhibited on Sundays by going through a conventional routine. It is a thing to live by, always."

Sacred and Secular

If man is required to maintain constant fellowship with God, does it mean that he must be always in prayer or meditation? No, on the other hand, it requires that worldly works should be sanctified and turned into adoration. As a matter of fact, sacred and secular works are equivalent; both are equally capable of promoting man's spiritual development provided the necessary conditions are fulfilled. This revolutionary idea has been summed up in two famous verses of the *Gita.* "Man reacheth the highest perfection by being intent on his own duty (Karma). He from whom is the evolution of all beings, by whom all this is pervaded, by worshipping Him with his own duty a man winneth perfection."

The teacher by his teaching, the doctor by his healing, the workman by looking after machines, the administrator by managing his department or concern, the shoemaker by mending shoes—efficiently and in the proper spirit—all perform Yoga no less effective than the devotee rapt in *Japa* or meditation, which alone are popularly believed to link up man with God.

This idea has been stressed recently by many saints and seers. Thus Sister Nivedita wrote in inspiring words: "Work is as necessary to the growth of the soul as is the Vedanta; perhaps more so. And work is at all times within our own power. The bhakta practises the ceremonies of worship. Work is the *puja* which a man offers to that Great Power which is manifested as Nature... If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realisation. No distinction henceforth between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religious. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid... Fighting is worship as good as praying. Labour is offering as acceptable as Ganges water. Study is austerity more costly and more precious than a fast. Mutual aid is better than any *puja*."

Says Mervyn Stockwood, Bishop of Southwark, in his article in the book *I Believe*: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and the goal of history, as far as it concerns us in this world, is to establish a community of nations in which all resources shall be used not for profit or personal aggrandisement but to meet the needs of men and to foster the full life. Such a conception of the Church's task cancels division between sacred and secular, because everything falls within its scope—personal and public morality, sociology, industrial and agricultural planning, health and education, politics, the arts and leisure. There is nothing more 'religious' about attending Church than there is in being present at a trade union meeting, going to a concert, or driving a tractor. The determining factor is the motive."

Swami Chidbhavananda has expressed the same view in his admirable commentary on the *Gita*. "It is customary with people to divide human activities into two distinctive types—the spiritual and the temporal, the sacred and the secular. But the *Bhagavad Gita* makes no such artificial distinction. Life pertaining to this world is in no way different from the spiritual... Action by itself is neither sacred nor secular. The attitude with which it is performed brings about a magical change in it. All the actions become sacred in the hands of a spiritual man. On the contrary, a man with a material outlook drags down even a sacred act to a vulgar plane... the message of the *Gita* is to metamorphose all actions into liberating, sacred ones."

Similar views have been expressed by Professor J. S. Haldane, a distinguished biologist. In his book *The Sciences and Philosophy*, he wrote: "The person who is doing in all sincerity the duties that present themselves to him in whatever station he occupies is in direct contact with Spiritual Reality."

Now listen to the experiences of Brother Lawrence, a European saint, as recorded by one of his friends in the book *The Practice of the Presence of God*. "That he was more united to God in his outward employments than when he left them for devotion and retirement. That it was a great delusion to think that the time of prayer ought to differ from other times, that we are as strictly obliged to adhere to God by action in the time of action as by prayer in the season of prayer. The time of business, said he, does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and chatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."

In his book *The Conquest of Fear*, Basil King writes: 'The Kingdom of God is the Universal Kingdom, including every one and every thing—all interests, all commerce, all government, all invention, all art, all amusement, all the staid pursuits of the old and all the ardour of the young. all sport, all laughter, all that makes for gladness. It is the kingdom of the bird and the flower and the horse and the motor-car and the motion picture house and the office and the theatre and the ball room and the school and the college and everything else that man has evolved for himself. He has evolved these things wrongly because nine times out of ten he has seen them as outside God's Kingdom, instead of being God's own undertakings, because they are ours.

All that we have to do to seek His Kingdom is to do what we are doing every day, with energy and fun, but to do it knowing we are His agents and co-workers..."

In short, temporal works are on a par with religious pursuits and the spiritual value of both depends on the motives with which they are performed and the purpose for which they are eventually used.

The Gita has by turns extolled all the well-known varieties of yoga like Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga and Dhyana Yoga. Taking advantage of this, some scholars say that the Gita's favourite yoga is Bhakti Yoga, others say it is Karma Yoga and so on. As a matter of fact, the Gita has left the choice of these Yogas to individual taste and temperament, *Swabhava*. "Even a wise man acts in accordance with his own nature. What can restraint avail?" What the Gita advocates, as already explained, is *Nitya Yoga* or *Satata Yoga*, in which every circumstance of life is made an occasion for meeting the Lord and every duty is made His adoration. This constant yoga includes, but is far superior to, all types of conventional yoga practised as a part-time sadhana.

CHAPTER 11

KARMA YOGA

Essentials of Karma Yoga

It is the business of religion to teach the art by which any work, sacred or secular, big or small, may be turned into true worship or made spiritually uplifting. The Gita has taught this art with consummate skill. This, indeed, is the Gospel of Karma Yoga.

Its first principle is that work is essential for man. It is a blessing of God, not a curse. It is one of man's most precious privileges, one of his fundamental rights, in fact, the source of all other rights. It brings him the good things of life and promotes his physical, mental as well as moral and spiritual well-being. In his book *Religion without Revelation,* Julian Huxley writes: "The world demands work. Work is needed for the mere maintenance of life, more work is needed for the maintenance of a particular level of civilisation; still more work is needed if we look to the future and aim at giving later generations better chances of fuller life."

But all work must be done enthusiastically and efficiently. For yoga is skill in action, and this skill is of two kinds—worldly and spiritual. This brings us to the second requirement of Karma Yoga—efficiency in the popular sense. This means several things. First, the performance must be neat and accurate, free from mistakes and done to a fine finish. Secondly, the rate of working should be high and the work should be completed on time. Dilatoriness is a sign of inefficiency. Speed and accuracy may appear mutually exclusive, and this is no doubt true in the earlier stages, but as a man grows in efficiency he develops both. Thirdly, the work must be done with due economy of labour, money and material. As a corollary, an efficient man can put in long hours of work without feeling tired. The fourth and highest ingredient of efficiency—and the last to come, if ever—is originality or creativeness. A truly efficient man is not simply a routine or repetitive worker. But he breaks new ground, introduces time and labour-saving devices, opens up new horizons of knowledge and produces two grains of corn where only one grew before.

The third principle of Karma Yoga requires work to possess spiritual merit. The average person works from selfish motives—for money, power, rank and fame—or not at all. To progress spiritually he must ennoble his motives and make them more and more other-centred and altruistic. He must work from a sense of duty, for the good of the community, as an example to others; and, if he believes in God, for His sake and pleasure, as an act of sacrifice, as an offering to Him and as an employee of His government on earth. "Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou eatest, whatsoever thou givest, whatsoever thou doest of austerity, O Kaunteya, do thou that as an offering unto Me."

The fourth principle of Karma Yoga relates to the distribution of the fruits of one's labours. Even when a man works unselfishly he acquires a great many things as the reward of his labours. All this, in reality, belongs to God and should, therefore, be ploughed back into His service—that is, the service of all living creatures. For this the Gita has used the term 'renunciation of the fruit of action'. This means that whatever man gets should be shared liberally with others. This sharing, the divine socialism of Sri Krishna, requires each one to contribute joyously to the welfare and development of others. This, declares the Gita, is the best of sadhanas, which immediately leads to peace.

"Better indeed is knowledge than constant practice; than knowledge meditation is better; than meditation renunciation of the fruit of action; on renunciation follows peace."

Explaining the technique of renunciation of the fruit of action Sri Aurobindo writes, "All fruit has to be renounced, to be given up to the Power that directs the work, and yet the work has to be done that is imposed by it on the nature... And here the Gita gives an ascending scale of potencies and assigns *the palm of excellence to this Yoga of desireless action*... But more powerful still is the giving up of the fruit of one's work, because that immediately destroys all cause of disturbance and brings and preserves auotmatically an inner calm and peace."

Writing under the caption 'Mukti is Sharing', Sadhu Vaswani says, "The nations need witness-bearers to the truth that in freedom from greed and pride is the true freedom of people, that in the self-giving which multiplies the joy of humanity is the power and glory of civilization. The nations need world-patriots—thinkers and artists, poets, preachers and statesmen—who would lift individuals and states beyond the exclusively national to the universal, beyond race-pride to world vision,—the vision of the Divine Humanity."

Scientific Basis of Karma Yoga

That work is essential to life is a scientific fact. Thus, according to Erich Fromm, a noted psychologist, the power to act creates a need to use that power and the failure to use that power results in dysfunction and unhappiness. "Work", says Alexis Carrel in his book *Man the Unknown*, is more effective than alcohol and morphine in helping people to bear adverse conditions. But inaction augments all sufferings. The more a muscle works, the more it develops. Activity strengthens it, instead of wearing it out. An organ atrophies when not used. We become adapted to the lack of use of our organic and mental systems by degenerating. Senescence seems to be delayed when body and mind are kept working."

On the spiritual side, Karma Yoga requires man not to worry about the results, not to hanker after personal gain and not to be too much attached to his acquisitions; for worry, greed and attachment are evil and productive of pain. As a matter of fact, the fruits of his labours are bound to come to him, sooner or later, according to the laws of nature. Automatically and inevitably a man reaps as he sows. No power can permanently deprive him of his dues. But when he asserts his rights, when he allows his mind to be distracted by thoughts of personal gain, not only does he get caught up in worldliness, but his efficiency also suffers, because he works with a mind which is divided between the actual performance of the work and anxiety for the impression he is making on the gallery and the benefits which are likely to accrue to him. If he is not preoccupied with personal interests, he can apply his whole heart and soul to the task in hand and thereby improve his performance and output. In other words, by following Sri Krishna's teaching a man actually increases his profits. Sometimes it may seem as if he is being cheated of his dues, but in the long run the results are better than if he had worked with an eye always on his own good. Under the Law of Karma he is bound to get back all his dues with compound interest.

"Has the naturalist or chemist," says Emerson, "learned his craft, who has explored the gravity of atoms and the elective affinities, who has not yet discerned the deeper law whereof this is only a partial or approximate statement, namely that like draws like; and that the goods which belong to you gravitate to you and need not be pursued with pains and cost? . . . We take a great deal of pains to waylay and entrap that which of itself will fall into our hands."

The Gita says that man has no right to the fruit of his actions. This is quite true in the sense that he has no absolute or exclusive right to them. Whatever he accomplishes is the result of the combined efforts of many brains and hands, both past and present; truly speaking, they are all co-authors of the work and entitled to share in the reward. Under this category would come all the people who brought him up, who taught him in school or college, the writers of the books he read, those who look after his physical needs, or help or encourage him in his work, and many others. In short, the person who is the accredited accomplisher of a task is never its sole author. Man's life and work require the help and cooperation of a large number of people, specified as well as unspecified. Therefore the fruits of his labours belong not to himself alone but to society.

Sri Krishna requires every one to share the fruits of his labours with those who need them. Mutual give and take are essential for the maintenance of life. The common man is mainly interested in getting and grabbing, though religion teaches him to give as much as he can. In fact, all religions have a precept that service of man is service of God, but religious people are inclined to dismiss it as a mere figure of speech. Eminent scientists can think of no better way than to do all work selflessly and for general good. Thus according to Julian Huxley our true destiny consists in giving actuality to the ideal and the secret of making progress in this task is to train the spirit to all disinterested activity.

"The great problem of finding human meaning in life in the modern world," writes A. H. Compton, distinguished physicist, in his book *The Cosmos of A. H. Compton,* "has a simple answer. It lies in losing oneself in the effort to give one's fellows an opportunity to attain lives of highest value.... our setting requires that each of us shall serve his fellows. Full human value comes from this service only when we give it freely because we want our fellows also to grow to their best. As we lose ourselves in such service, our lives attain a certain nobility. We find our souls." Paul Campbell, in his book *Modernising Man,* writes, "Man evolves when he uses his brain for unselfish rather than selfish aims. It means caring enough to have a strategy to meet the needs of the neighbours across the street, across the border and across the world."

Karma Yoga is a basic and universal yoga. Its principles apply to all works, whether sacred or secular. It is very important to remember that even prayer, japa and meditation do not automatically sanctify a man but only when they are accompanied by a dedicated, selfless and altruistic pattern of life.

According to Swami Rama Tirtha complete self-absorption in work is the highest Yoga, the greatest bliss, the source of inspiration and creativity. It gives a taste of *Nirvana, Kaivalya* and salvation. To quote his own inspiring words:

"All books in running brooks and sermons in stones preach with unmistakable accent the gospel of continuous, incessant work ... The underlying secret of a lamp's lustre and splendour is that it spares not its wick and oil ... Work, ever performing work, is the first principle of success. 'From good to better, daily self-surpassed.'

"The positive joy that accompanies fruitful work is a spark of salvation, unconscious Self-realization. It keeps you pure, untainted and one with Divinity. No prize or appreciation can be more benign or salubrious than the immediate joy which accompanies earnest action.

"Attack! Attack! Hammer on! Hammer on! Work, work, so as to realize the nothingness of the body and the supreme reality of the true self. Thus at the height of apparent activity you will taste *Nirvana* and *Kaivalya*. When in this way you have suffered your personality and ego to be raised on the Cross of Labour, success will seek you and there will be no scarcity of people who will come and appreciate.

"Intense work, according to Vedanta, is rest. This incessant work unwittingly leads you to the highest yoga. There is no necessity of your retiring into the forests and pursuing abnormal practices to realize Vedantic Yoga. *You are father of Yoga, Shiva himself, when you are lost in activity.*

"Intense work, incessant labour, is the greatest Yoga for a man of the world."

The man of God concerns himself primarily with his duties and responsibilities. He does his best at all times and in all circumstances. But having done so, he leaves himself in the gracious hands of God instead of trying to carry himself upon his own shoulders. The main object of his labours is the pleasure of God and the good of His creatures; his own happiness and progress are the inevitable by-products of his activities and he gets them in abundance too.

CHAPTER 12

BUDDHI YOGA OR THE YOGA OF INTELLIGENCE

Faith, Reason and Effort

Faith is a necessity of life and we use it more often than we realise. In all matters where some of the factors involved are unknown or uncertain, our course of action ultimately rests on faith—the faith that things will turn out the way we expect. Even science is based on the faith that Nature is orderly and ruled by law and will behave in future as it has done in the past. Faith in the form of hope is a source of strength and a sustainer of effort. Life would become intolerable if a man lacked faith in himself, in his destiny, in his friends, and in the case of many people, in God.

This, however, does not mean that faith is sufficient to meet all the needs of man. As we know, faith alone—that is, faith unaccompanied by appropriate actions—cannot get us food or drink, clothing or shelter, knowledge or skill, goodness or character. Moreover, when beliefs differ, as they often do, what is there to decide which of them is right? As a matter of fact, reason, knowledge and effort are all indispensable like faith; and faith which contradicts or belittles them is positively harmful.

Both reason and faith are thus seen to be necessary. Their mixture in varying proportions is used in all walks of life. At one end is science which is essentially an intellectual and practical activity; at the other is conventional religion, which is mostly faith with very little of reason. But reason is primary and faith subsidiary. Faith cannot take the place of intelligence or knowledge. It is rightly brought in to fill the gaps in reasoning and knowledge. But where certain knowledge is available or can be obtained, reason is the appropriate tool and not faith. At present knowledge is expanding fast; so faith is being pushed out steadily from many of its old strongholds to areas further and further away.

Faith has a legitimate role in religion. In fact, the two words are often used synonymously. But it is well to recognise that human credulity has its limits and these limits are being rapidly lowered under the impact of science. In the present age faith cannot survive as an antithesis of reason. Nor is the cause of religion advanced by insisting that unquestioning faith is the greatest virtue and its lack the worst sin, that even by the slightest doubt or surprise about a religious teaching man quickly brings the wrath of God upon himself. Faith must learn to live with reason, knowledge and effort and recognise them as the senior partners in the management of life.

The Place of Reason in Hinduism

The western religions are largely based on faith. They derive their authority from the private messages which certain lofty souls are believed to have received directly from God or his angels, thus placing them outside the pale of human intellect and discussion. For centuries Hinduism too has been ignoring reason and this is why evil practices have crept in. But if we examine the matter deeply we find that the seers of ancient India accorded the highest place to reason and intellect in the conduct of life—even in the field of religion. Thus the *Upanishads* have likened the human body to a chariot in which the individual soul is riding. The driver of this chariot is Buddhi or intellect, while the senses are its horses. The intellect is, therefore, the greatest among the assistants of the soul and is as necessary for man's spiritual progress as for his success and happiness in the world. The Vedas have many passages—apart from the famous Gayatri Mantra—emphasising the importance of an enlightened intellect:

'We meditate upon the supreme Light of that Effulgent Creator. May He inspire our intellect!

'O intellect, you are the foremost for us!

'O you desirous of being great acquire knowledge!

'Endow us with perfect intelligence and wisdom,
O Bounteous Lord!'

In the Gita, Sri Krishna has repeatedly stressed the role of intelligence. He has coined a new term 'Buddhi Yoga' and given it the pride of place among all the systems of yoga. For example, he says: "I am the intelligence of the intelligent." "Therefore, take refuge in Buddhi, O Arjuna." "Mentally dedicating all deeds to Me, having Me as the highest goal, resorting to Buddhi Yoga, do you ever fix your mind (mana) on Me."

Whatever one may like to accomplish in the world two things are indispensable—labour and intelligence. Therefore the teaching of the Gita starts with Karma Yoga and Buddhi Yoga. These two yogas have a universal application and are, in fact, the foundation of all other yogas. Their use is as necessary in the practice of meditation and japa as in that of medicine, law or teaching. Even the best of religious exercises cannot advance a man spiritually if carried out unintelligently or with evil intentions.

Buddhi Yoga requires the trained, developed and enlightened intellect to be equipped with various kinds of necessary knowledge, to be used for the conduct of life and for extending the frontiers of knowledge. According to a Biblical story Adam and Eve, with all their progeny, were severely punished for eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge. But Sri Krishna insists on knowledge and every variety of it. "Man", says the Gita, "can cross over all sin by the raft of knowledge." "There is no purifier in the world like knowledge." "When God wants to shower His grace on some one He gives him Buddhi Yoga, or the shining lamp of wisdom, by which he clearly sees his way through life and attains God."

Two remarkable verses of the Gita are worth mentioning here. One reads: All the Vedas are as useful to an enlightened Brahman as is a tank in a place covered all over with water. This verse is not intended, as some people think, to slight the Vedas or any section of them. It merely states the simple fact that great as are the Vedas, the total knowledge contained in them bears to the total volume of truth—known as well as unknown—the same ratio as a tank does to a vast, in fact, limitless, expanse of water. Truth is an attribute of God, even synonymous with Him, and as such is infinite like Him. Therefore Sri Krishna insists that the quest for truth should not stop with the Vedas but must go on unremittingly and endlessly.

The other verse says: When your Buddhi has escaped from this tangle of delusion, then shall you gain indifference to things heard and yet to be heard.

An enlightened man, that is one who has acquired a clear understanding of the essentials of his duties, need no longer be tied to the apron strings of holy men or holy books. He must think for himself, identify the problems confronting him and use his own knowledge and experience to solve them. As if echoing the teachings of the Gita, the *Yoga Vasishtha* says: "God Vishnu, however long propitiated and however pleased, cannot bestow self-knowledge on one who does not think for himself. Reasonable words even of a child ought to be accepted, and those even of the Creator (Brahma) are to be discarded like straw if they are otherwise."

Identical views were expressed by one of the greatest saints of modern India, Swami Rama Tirtha. In his book *The Heart of Rama* he wrote: "Accept not a religion because it is the oldest; it being the oldest is no proof of its being the true one. Sometimes the oldest houses ought to be pulled down and the oldest clothes must be changed... Accept not a religion because it comes from a great ascetic, from a man who has renounced everything... Accept not a religion because it comes from a person whose character was the highest; oftentimes people of the grandest character have failed in expounding the truth... Accept a thing and believe in a religion on its own merits. Examine it yourself. Sift it."

Intelligence and Knowledge

The intelligence is used for the acquisition and advancement of knowledge. Man needs two kinds of knowledge—spiritual knowledge, or Vidya, for attaining immortality or perfection and secular knowledge, or Avidya, for living happily in the world.

Another important function of the intellect is to discriminate between higher and lower values, for example, the real and the seeming good, what is worth doing and what is not, truth and falsehood, the important and the unimportant, the immediate requirement and what can be postponed, good and evil, fact and opinion, appearance and reality. The power of discrimination, or the critical faculty, enables a man to choose one out of a number of alternatives available to him, to arrive at proper decisions and to make correct judgments about men and matters. Discrimination is the acid test of the intellect and this is the criterion employed by Sri Krishna to classify the intellect into three grades. He says in the Gita: "The intellect which knows what is right action and what is right cessation of action; what must be done and what ought not to be done, what is fear and what constitutes fearlessness, what is bondage and what is liberation, is Sattvic (highest class). That intelligence by which one understands incorrectly what is right and what is wrong, what must be done and what ought not to be done, partakes of Rajas (medium grade). That reason which, enveloped in ignorance, thinks the wrong to be right, and regards all things contrary, is Tamasic" (lowest grade).

Grades of Knowledge

In three short verses of the Gita, Sri Krishna has explained the criteria for judging the intrinsic worth of any piece of knowledge. He says: "That knowledge by which man sees one imperishable entity in all beings, undivided among the divided, know that knowledge to be Sattvic. But that knowledge which regards the manifold existence in all beings as separate and different from one another, know that knowledge to be Rajasic. While that knowledge by which one clings to each one thing as if it were the whole, without reason, without grasping the reality, narrow, that knowledge is declared to be Tamasic."

These are words of profound wisdom for evaluating ideas, whether in the field of knowledge or in the affairs of life.

The motto of the lowest type of knowledge is—This alone is true: of the second grade—Either this or that: and of the highest grade—Both this and that. The three grades stand respectively for opposition, isolation and co-operation.

The lowest or dark variety of knowledge is intolerant of other knowledge or differing views on the subject. It discourages independent thinking and thereby blocks the growth of knowledge. It engenders narrow-mindedness, bigotry and fanaticism.

In the medium grade of knowledge all creatures, all objects, all bits of knowledge are seen as separate and independent entities with nothing in common. Science and religion are divided into watertight compartments; and so are matter and energy, living and non-living, plant and animal and the different nations and religions of the world. All branches of knowledge stand eternally apart with no possibility of integration and with nothing to be gained by integration—if it were possible. The interests of each individual, each nation, each religion, are entirely separate from those of the rest. This way of thinking, characterizing the second grade of knowledge, takes the diversity of the world as the ultimate reality and makes no effort to dig deeper for any greater truth.

The best or enlightened grade of knowledge is that which takes note of the variety in the world and also of the unity that lies behind it. Its wide vision takes in many things at one sweep and sees them all in harmony, in co-operation and converging towards one point. Thus in its infancy science saw different forms of matter and energy, living and non-living, particle and wave, as sharply divided, each from the other; but with every advance it sees the lines of demarcation thinning out and multiplicity giving place to unity. Science is in the lowest grade, or in its infancy, when it regards other branches of knowledge, particularly religion, as useless, false or superstitious. When science rises to a higher level of vision, it treats religion with indifference, as an entirely separate and independent discipline. Science only reaches fulfilment or maturity when it accepts religion as a useful, nay indispensable, collaborator in the service of mankind and promotes the growth and dissemination of healthy religion.

These remarks apply with equal force to religion. It is the lowest or dark form of religion which cannot stand other religions or art or science. We have already seen how religion in its narrowness led to wars and for many centuries stifled the growth of science. When religion reaches adolescence it tolerates art and science but views them with suspicion lest they should invade its sanctity. When a religion reaches maturity, it begins to appreciate the good in other religions, it welcomes art and science and recognises a variety of paths to reach the same goal.

God is a lover of variety. So He is a lover of knowledge. He welcomes new ideas, new solutions of old problems, new ways of doing things. He is a great learner and always keeps his eyes on the lookout and his ears on the *qui vive* for new truth. He regards every new thought, every exception to accepted theory, every new fact or phenomenon not covered by known laws, not as enemies of present knowledge, but as the first glimmer of new vistas of truth.

Practical Applications

The first phase in the practice of Buddhi Yoga is education, which trains the mind to concentrate, to acquire knowledge and think for itself. Thereafter the individual develops skill or efficiency, preferably superb skill, in his calling. Another very important aspect of Buddhi Yoga is the extension of various kinds of knowledge, such as science, technology, arts and letters. But to become Yoga, all acquisitions and resources of man have to be devoted to the service of God and the good of his creatures. Unless this precaution is taken, knowledge, wealth and power easily turn to evil and some of the cleverest persons have been the most crooked. Therefore, along with knowledge and skill we must also cultivate character and goodness. This is where religion must step in to play its part.

But this cannot be done by a religion which is limited to faith, prayer and worship. Therefore it is necessary to widen the definition of religion so as to include not only worship but also self-development, self-discipline, self-dedication and the proper performance of all duties.

Religion needs to rejuvenate itself with an infusion of science and common sense. Each of its precepts must answer some crucial tests. Is it reasonable? Is it consistent with other relevant and well-established doctrines? Does it accord with the facts of common experience and the lessons of history? Is it practicable? Is it good for the individual as well as society? Will it promote the best interests of mankind if practised by a great many people? These are some of the criteria which will help to sort out religious teachings which are sensible and beneficial from others which harm humanity by setting man against man, by encouraging fanaticism, persecution and wars, by promoting permissiveness and irresponsibility or by exalting poverty, weakness or stupidity as passports to heaven.

It is intelligence which distinguishes man from the lower animals. But his talents are mostly in a potential form like a seed. He cannot outgrow his animal nature or even meet the challenges of daily life without a trained and developed intellect. In the absence of a mature mind even the best of religious principles are likely to be misunderstood and misapplied. This is how faith has displaced right conduct; and even-mindedness, which is correctly applicable to one's own pleasure and pain, has made many people indifferent to the sufferings of fellow-men. For the same reason religion is largely other-worldly and super-natural in its origin, in its disciplines as well as its aims. Occult powers, mystic experiences and super-conscious states have come to be regarded as the essence of spirituality, though it is well known that even demons can boast of them.

It is high time we take a rational and realistic view of religion and shift the emphasis from faith and esoteric exercises to the common activities of life; from subjective and private criteria of holiness to others which are objective and acceptable to the people at large; from individual salvation to public good; from extra-sensory powers to super-excellence in one's own profession. The goal of religion should be restated as the spiritualisation of man and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth by voluntary effort rather than the admission, after death, of a few unwilling and undeserving persons to a remote heaven of effortless ease and unrestricted pleasure. Religious leaders should possess not only faith and devotion but also wisdom and vision if these objectives are to be realized.

CHAPTER 13

YAJNA OR HUMAN CO-OPERATION

Yajna, or sacrifice, is one of the important teachings of Hinduism. It is an essential ingredient of the path of works, which requires all life to be lived as a Yajna. Originally, in prehistoric times, Yajna meant animal sacrifices; subsequently its emphasis shifted to costly and elaborate rituals performed for the sake of specific objectives. The concept of Yajna underwent a radical change in the hands of Sri Krishna. He extended its meaning so as to include all religious and worldly works done in a spirit of self-sacrifice, that is those intended for the maintenance or advancement of society.

In the Gita Sri Krishna has laid very great stress on the lesson of Yajna. For example, he says: "Having created mankind in the beginning together with Yajna, the Creator said: 'By this shall you propagate; this shall be the milch cow of your desires. Nourish the Devas with this; and may those Devas nourish you; thus nourishing one another, you shall reap the supreme good. Nourished by Yajna, the Devas shall bestow on you the enjoyments you desire. A thief verily is he who enjoys what is given by them without returning them anything.' The good ones who eat the remains of sacrifice are freed from all sins; but the sinful ones who cook food only for themselves, they verily eat sin. He who does not follow on earth the wheel thus revolving, sinful of life and rejoicing in the senses, he, O Partha, lives in vain."

Thus the duty to undertake, or join others in, tasks which promote public good, was laid on man at the very time of creation and he was told then that the discharge of this obligation, however burdensome it may seem, would be the talisman for his growth and development as well as for the fulfilment of his desires. The law of life is Yajna—mutual help or co-operative effort. It is compulsory for all. It requires every one to pour into the common pool whatever he has of knowledge, wealth or labour; to contribute all he can for the general good. This is the key to the well-being of the individual as well as society. Man promotes his own interests best by meeting the needs of the society in which he lives. What is more, by serving fellow-men he serves God.

Yogi Krishna Prem writes in his book *The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita*: "The sacrifice (Yajna) which the Gita mentions next must not be limited to the ceremonial sacrifices of ancient India. The Yajna of the Gita means sacrificial action in general, the dedication of one's goods and deeds and self to the service of the one Life in all. The sattvika man will do this not out of any desire for personal reward, even in the shape of his own salvation, but because his sattvika nature reflects the knowledge of the Cosmic sacrifice and impels him to participate therein."

According to Swami Chidbhavananda, "Competition, co-operation and self-dedication are the three ways in which human beings make life a fulfilment... The act of offering the best and the most useful in one for the welfare of others is self-dedication. Both the giver and the receiver stand to gain through this sacred act... This bounteous act goes by the name of Yajna, which literally means sacrifice. As fresh water springs out from an emptied well, the man who performs Yajna becomes more and yet more enlightened and prosperous."

Explaining the principle of Yajna, Shri Aurobindo writes: "Existence is one and its divisions must found themselves on some law of mutual dependence, each growing by each and living by all. Where sacrifice is not willingly given, Nature extracts it by force, she satisfies the law of her living. A mutual giving and receiving is the law of Life, without which it cannot for one moment endure, and this fact is... the proof that with sacrifice as their eternal companion the Lord of creatures has created all these existences."

"Sacrifice," writes Alexis Carrel, winner of Nobel Prize, in his famous book *Man the Unknown,* "seems to be a necessary condition of progress... We know the social and individual importance of renunciation. Nations have always paid the highest honours to those who gave up their lives to serve their country. The concept of sacrifice, of its absolute social necessity, must be introduced into the mind of modern man." Sant Jnaneswar has summed up the principle of Yajna in these beautiful words: "Your obligatory duties are the one sacrifice (Yajna) you should offer. Do your duties cheerfully and without desire for fruits... The performance of duty is the only sacrifice worth practising. Therefore act accordingly. Duties properly done will fulfil all your desires."

Struggle for Existence

In the nineteenth century western thought was dominated by Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest. It meant that civilization advanced not through love or mutual aid but as a result of the elimination of the weak by the strong, the cunning and the ruthless. Nature itself was thus shown to be sanctioning imperialism, racialism, and all kinds of exploitation of the underdeveloped. The results could not but be disastrous for humanity. In his book *Science and Human Life*, J.A.V. Butler, a noted biologist, writes: "It might be thought that the concept of evolution as unfolded by the scientists was so sublime that it would produce a feeling of humility and wonder in contemplating such a tremendous and potent process. But its effect on the whole has been the reverse; it gave rise in some scientists and many other people to arrogance; a feeling that because human beings could unravel such a process, they were its masters. It was the direct ancestor of political systems which magnified brute force and regarded strife as necessary and good because it weeded out the unfit. It provided the theory behind the German cult of power politics and much of the scientific background of Marxism, and therefore must be held responsible to some extent for the disastrous conflicts of the twentieth century."

Similar views have been expressed by Lord Samuel in his book *Belief and Action*: "Thinkers of the nineteenth century believed that a firm basis for ethics was to be found in the principle of Evolution. Nature had decreed a struggle for existence as the means to the survival of the fittest, and so to the progress of the species...It was held to justify an unrestrained economic competition between individuals, a conscienceless bargaining between interests, a ruthless struggle between States. Industrial oppression was part of the natural order of things, and war the ordained instrument of the progress of mankind."

Scientists now recognise that though competition and struggle are useful to some extent, altruism and co-operation are the real key to the advancement of humanity. Says A. H. Compton, "Here is precisely what is needed to fit man to life in the world that science is shaping, that he shall love his neighbour with the kind of love that inspires one to help his neighbour live... He will gladly co-operate in tasks toward the common good. It is the presence of persons with such a spirit that gives strength to the modern social order."

In his book *The Evolution of Human Nature*, C. J. Herrick, eminent biologist writes: "As human society is now organised, the law of the jungle is outmoded, and the sooner we find this out, the better it will be for us... We have won intellectual supremacy over the brutes, but that is not enough. We have not won control over our own brutish impulses for self-gratification at the expense of our neighbours. We have not learned that the voluntary renunciation of some personal and national advantages is the only possible way to keep the peace and win security and opportunity for cultural progress... Quite apart from any ethical considerations and in terms of strictly biological survival value, altruistic behaviour marks the highest level of cultural evolution. It is a key factor and the only one that can relieve the tensions that now endanger all the cultures of the world."

Yajna as Collective Service

It is necessary to draw attention to another feature of Yajna which generally passes unnoticed. In Vedic times Yajnas were often performed by one person with the help of others to whom different but complementary duties were allotted; many brought their offerings to the sacred fire. Such Yajnas were not like congregational worship in which every one did the same thing as the officiating priest. Rather they were collective enterprises in which every one made his distinctive contribution to the total effort and which exemplified the principle of unified control, division of labour with specialisation, delegation of powers, organisation and supervision—in a rudimentary form. This aspect of Yajna, representing organised collective effort in a good cause, deserves much better recognition by religious leaders and thinkers than it has hitherto received. For if there is one lesson more than another which life teaches, history endorses and science stands for, it is that co-operation holds the key to the peace, prosperity and progress of mankind.

By his unaided efforts an individual can accomplish much, but his capacity and talents are limited. However, he is not doomed to remain poor, weak or ignorant. For by intelligent co-operation, by using the knowledge, labour or wealth of others he can multiply his own powers to an incredible extent. This kind of co-operative effort is the highest type of Yajna, which, according to the Gita, is the fulfiller of all desires. The seers of India have always stressed the importance of co-operative effort. Many passages in the Vedas inculcate this valuable lesson. An example is this famous prayer: "May we all work together. May we all speak with one voice! May we all be of one mind! May we share with one another the goods of life."

Increasingly scientists are recognising the importance of co-operation for the progress and even survival of humanity. Thus A. H. Compton, Nobel Laureate, quotes with approval the following statement of Niels Bohr, another Nobel Prize winner and number one atomic physicist of his time: "The rapid advance of science and technology in our age, which involves such bright promises and grave dangers, presents civilisation with a most serious challenge,"... and to meet this challenge, "the road is indicated by that world-wide co-operation which has manifested itself through the ages in the development of science."

Alfred Adler, one of the pioneers of modern psychology, says: "It was only because men learned to co-operate that we could make the great discovery of the division of labour; a discovery which is the chief security for the welfare of mankind. To preserve human life would not be possible if each individual attempted to wrest a living from the earth by himself with no co-operation and no results of co-operation in the past. Through the division of labour we can use the results of many different kinds of training and organise many different abilities so that all of them contribute to the common welfare and guarantee relief from insecurity and increased opportunity for all the members of society... As far as we can understand from our relation to our own planet, earth, the logical answer to the problem of occupation, the only answer in accordance with common sense, is that we should *work, co-operate and contribute*. This has always been felt in the intuitions of mankind. We can see its necessity, now from the scientific angle... Mankind calls only those individuals geniuses who have contributed much to the common welfare. We cannot imagine a genius who has left no advantage to mankind behind him... The oldest striving of mankind is for men to join with their fellow-men. It is through interest in our fellow-men that all the progress of our race has been made."

"Man loses his true stature," said Rabindranath Tagore, "when he fails to unite fully with his fellows. A complete man is one who has this capacity for union, a lone individual is a fragmented being... It is only by combining that man has achieved all that is worth while in life—knowledge, faith, power, wealth. Sandy soil yields no crop because it does not stick together... It is the same with human beings. Where the chasms between them are wide, their strength is of no use... What is civilisation but a state of union in which the strength of each individual adds power to all and the power of all fortifies the individuals?... Individualism and competition are necessary for the generation of power, but danger comes when the proper limits are exceeded."

In the words of J. A. V. Butler, "Science is a co-operative effort... Science has been successful first because it established a means of combining the efforts of many individuals in the study of natural phenomena, a project which has always been too vast an undertaking for any one person to study with any hope of success."

The greatest marvel of co-operation was the flight to the moon. Commenting on this, Rosscote Pillai writes in his charming book *Voyage to the Moon*: "The world saw only the spectacular feat of the three men but was not even remotely aware of its 4,00,000 scientists and engineers, technicians and workers, who strained every nerve and fibre of their being to design and construct the giant Saturn rockets, each with 15 million individual parts, and the Apollo vehicles, which the astronauts fondly called 'cosy little homes,' which performed every little assigned task from blast-off to splash-down within the assigned second... President Nixon gratefully acknowledged that the greatest achievement in human history was not only due to America but to entire humanity. For it can be claimed without fear of contradiction that it was only the climax of the unremitting endeavour of almost all nations and several successive generations. Who can forget the Chinese who invented the rocket, the Indians who first used it in modern times, the British who developed it further, the Germans who put in it awesome power and the Russians who harnessed it for the first time for space flight?"

Under the caption 'Society and Personality' the famous scientist, Albert Einstein wrote: "When we survey our lives and endeavours, we soon observe that almost the whole of our actions and desires is bound up with the existence of other human beings. We notice that our whole nature resembles that of the social animals. We eat food that others have produced, wear clothes that others have made, live in houses that others have built. The greater part of our knowledge and beliefs has been communicated to us by other people through the medium of a language which others have created. Without language our mental capacities would be poor indeed, comparable to those of the higher animals; we have, therefore, to admit that we owe our principal advantage over the beasts to the fact of living in human society. The individual, if left alone from birth, would remain primitive and beast-like in his thoughts and feelings to a degree that we can hardly conceive. The individual is what he is and has the significance that he has, not so much by virtue of his individuality but rather as a member of a great human community, which directs his material and spiritual existence from the cradle to the grave... A man's value to the community depends primarily on how far his feelings, thoughts and actions are directed towards promoting the good of his fellows. We call him good or bad according to his attitude in this respect."

Says Bentley Glass, noted biologist, in his book *Science and Ethical Values*: "The values inherent in co-operation and co-ordination, promoted so blindly but so perfectly on the level of the cell by the chemical organisation it possesses, promoted so perfectly and so blindly in the insect society by their inherited instincts and their mutual recognition of their fellows, must in the society which is based on learning be imposed by force or be nurtured by conscience. Religion that exalts these values, that declares that all men are brothers, and invokes the force of human kindness and of brotherly love to cement these bonds, clearly plays a great part in the preservation of this type of society."

In the inimitable words of Swami Rama Tirtha: "Putting our hands together for the common good is sacrifice to Indra. Putting our heads together for universal good is sacrifice to Brihaspati; putting our hearts together is sacrifice to the *Devata* of hearts or Chandra. In short, sacrifice to the gods means offering my hands to All the Hands or the whole nation; offering my eyes to All the Eyes or entire community; offering my mind to All the Minds; merging my interests in the interests of the country; feeling *all* as if they were my own Self; in other words, realizing in practice *Tat Twam Asi*, 'That Thou Art'.

Thus we see that Yajna is another great lesson of both religion and science. Wherever men labour together in fellowship and co-operation, in homes and offices, in schools and factories, or in public utility services, their work becomes Yajna or sacrifice when carried out in a spirit of dedication for the good of the people or as an offering to the Lord who abides in all and is the ultimate beneficiary of all good deeds. Co-operation in good causes is the key to success and happiness in life and to the progress of civilization. According to Hinduism it is also an essential part of religious discipline, a reliable test of spirituality and a sure way to God-realization. Religions, if they are to survive, must teach and practise this great lesson on a massive scale.

CHAPTER 14

THE GOSPEL OF SUPER-EXCELLENCE

KARMA Yoga requires work to be done with skill; Vibhuti Yoga, with superlative skill. Vibhuti Yoga is the gospel of super-excellence or greatness in life. Though one hardly expects to find this among the precepts of religion, the Vedas are replete with passages where the aspirant prays for greatness. Here is one from the *Rig Veda*: "May the sun and the moon and the earth and the sea, the sky and the heaven made by Thee, be always favourable to us for achieving greatness!" The Gita has a whole chapter devoted to this topic. It has recounted a number of pre-eminent manifestations of God taken from different walks of life and even from inanimate objects—and human qualities. For example, Sri Krishna, speaking as the Supreme Lord, declares: "Among trees I am the holy fig; among cows the celestial cow of plenty; among sages Vyasa; among heavenly songsters Chitraratha; among generals Skanda; among men the king; among weapons the thunderbolt. I am the glory of the glorious, the victory of the victorious, the goodness of the good-natured." In this way Sri Krishna has commended the celebrities in all spheres of activity but not those who are only average or mediocre.

Sri Krishna summed up the generalised principle of Vibhuti Yoga in these words: "Whatsoever being is glorious, good, prosperous or powerful, understand thou that to go forth from a fragment of My splendour." Finally, as if to leave no room for doubt, the same lesson was taught by the Cosmic Form of the Lord. "Therefore, stand up! Win for thyself renown! Conquer thy foes, enjoy the wealth-filled realm!"

In this Yoga of super-excellence religion meets science as well as common sense. They all speak with one voice and teach the same great lesson of doing one's best, one's very best.

Self-development, as already mentioned, is one of the essential parts of religion. Man starts as a seed with several kinds of powers hidden in him and only waiting to be actualised. William James, famous Professor of Harvard, used to say that the average person develops only one-tenth of his latent mental ability. "Compared to what we ought to be," said he, "we are only half awake. We are making use of only a small part of our physical and mental resources. Stating the thing broadly, the human individual thus lives far within his limits. He possesses powers of various sorts which he habitually fails to use."

In his book *The Cosmos of A. H. Compton,* Professor Compton, Nobel Prize winner in physics, has commended the pursuit of excellence in these words: "Alfred Nobel once wrote of life:

'. . . . . a precious gift;
A gem that Nature gave to each of us,
That we might polish it until its sheen,
Should finally reward us for our pains.'

His bequest gives continual encouragement to those individuals of each generation who polish best the gem of life that Nature gave them so that the sheen may be shared by their fellow-men."

"The first commandment of the law of spiritual development," writes Alexis Carrel, Nobel Prize winner in medicine in his book *Reflections on Life,* "is that every one should realise the full measure of his inherited mental capacities, be these great or small. This obligation is universal. It applies equally to young and old, rich and poor, ignorant and learned... All... are equally capable, if they are really determined, of releasing the hidden spiritual energy in their own depths. Though consciousness develops side by side with the body, it does not stop developing when the body has finished growing. It is in middle age, when physiological activities have become less intense that consciousness tends to become deeper, wider, more purified. Intellect, aesthetic activity, moral strength and religious sense continue to develop even in old age."

In his book *Excellence,* J. W. Gardner, President of the Carnegie Foundation, writes: "We want meaning in our lives. When we raise our sights, strive for excellence, dedicate ourselves to the highest goals of our society, we are enrolling in an ancient and meaningful cause—the agelong struggle of man to realise the best that is in him. Man reaching toward the most exalted goals he can conceive, man striving impatiently and restlessly for excellence, has achieved great religious insights, created great works of art, penetrated secrets of the universe and set standards of conduct which give meaning to the phrase 'the dignity of man' ... But excellence implies more than competence. It implies a striving for the highest standards in every phase of life. We need individual excellence in all its forms in every kind of creative endeavour, in political life, in education, in industry—in short, universally."

Emerson wrote: "If a man can write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mouse-trap than his neighbour, though he build his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door."

The same lesson of super-excellence was taught by an English poet who sang:

If you can't be a pine on the top of the hill,
Be a scrub in the valley—but be
The best little scrub by the side of the rill;
If you can't be a bush, be a bit of grass,
And some highway happier make;
If you can't be a highway, then just be a trail:
If you can't be the Sun, be a star;
It is n't in size that you win or you fail—
BE THE *BEST* OF WHATEVER YOU ARE.

Another old song says:

If I were a cobbler, it would be my pride
The best of all cobblers to be,
If I were a tinker, no tinker
Should mend an old kettle like me.

Vibhuti Yoga and Karma Yoga

Very noble are those who practise Karma Yoga and work efficiently. By their collective effort they keep the world going. Even more important are the few who practise Vibhuti Yoga, who acquire exceptional ability and make valuable contributions to the knowledge, beauty or happiness of the world. They bring about the advancement of civilization. The scientists, inventors, saints, heroes, writers, artists, statesmen, administrators, doctors, industrialists and warriors, who by their lives enrich the world, are all benefactors of humanity. They are Vibhutis or manifestations of Divine glory. They improve things and leave the world better than they had found it.

"While all things are supported by God", writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, "things of beauty and splendour reveal Him more than others. Every deed of heroism, every life of sacrifice, every work of genius, is a revelation of the Divine."

Vibhuti Yoga is a natural corollary of Karma Yoga. If, as required by Karma Yoga, the disciple performs all his tasks as a servant or instrument of God, for His pleasure, or as an offering to Him, will he be content to let his performance be just ordinary or commonplace? Will he not like his work-offering to be the very best he is capable of producing? Would he not be eager to infuse some excellence, originality and distinctiveness into it in order to please the Lord?

Worldly excellence is no less acceptable to God than spiritual excellence. Both are necessary for the maintenance and advancement of the world. Both are, in fact, one, according to Vedanta. Elucidating this point, Sister Nivedita writes in her inspiring book *Religion and Dharma*: "We cannot be satisfied till our society has produced great minds in every branch of human activity. Advaita can be expressed in mechanics, in engineering, in art, in letters as well as in philosophy and meditation. But it can never be expressed in half-measures. The true Advaitin is the master of the world. He does not know a good deal of his chosen subject; he knows all there is to known. He does not perform his particular task fairly well; he does it as well as it is possible to do it... The highest achievements of the mind are a sadhana...... That man who has followed any kind of knowledge to its highest point is a rishi."

The ideal of all-round excellence is very difficult to attain. Only rare souls can become versatile geniuses. But every one can acquire mastery in some little branch of knowledge or skill. Every one can do at least some phases of his work superlatively well. And once this is done, superiority in one part of his life will act as the incentive, the nucleus and gathering point for superiority in other directions. Little by little a man can add to his accomplishments; step by step he can climb to the greatest heights.

Whatever be a man's vocation, he should not be content to remain a mediocre. From the commonplace he should lift himself to the level of the outstanding. This may be done by developing his strong point, selecting for specialisation the branch of knowledge or activity for which he has special aptitude and which he finds most interesting or easiest. He should strive for mastery in his chosen field and not rest content until he has reached the top and won honour and distinction for himself, using all his attainments for the good of mankind.

See God in his Manifestations

There is another—the traditional and usual—interpretation of Vibhuti Yoga. It requires man to see God in his glorious manifestations as a first step to seeing and worshipping Him in all, which is the ultimate objective. Long before this highest goal can be reached man must learn to see God in the great and the good, in the saint, the genius and the hero, and in those who help him or need his help. "Regard your mother as God, your father as God, your teacher as God and the guest as God," say the Upanishads.

It is impossible to know or see God in His entirety, as He is infinite, absolute and formless. But the wise are not beaten by this difficulty. They know that God has made Himself accessible to us in the form of His creation. We can know God through His own self-expressions. Though they give only partial and imperfect glimpses of Him, the way to God is undoubtedly through them and with their help.

It is God who comes to us in the good things of life and in the forms of those who help or encourage us and those who are benefactors of humanity. This idea has an appeal even to the western mind. Thus Basil King writes in his book *The Conquest of Fear*:

"I think it necessary to train the thought to seeing God as expressing Himself in all the good and pleasant and enjoyable things that come to us. This means forming a habit. It means saying to oneself daily, hourly, 'This is God', of incidents, persons and things we have rarely thought of in that relation ...

"But all good things must express the Universal; and all discovery of truth, whether by religion, science, philosophy or imaginative art, must be discovery in God. The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount are discoveries in God, but so are the advances in knowledge made by Plato, Aristotle, Roger Bacon and Thomas Edison. He shows Himself through Abraham, Moses, Isaiah and St. Paul, but also through Homer, Shakespeare, Michaelangelo, Beethoven, Darwin, George Eliot, William James and Henry Irving. I take the names at random as illustrating different branches of endeavour ... No one department of human effort is specially His, or His special expression. The church cannot be so more than the stage or music more than philosophy.

"When the Lord restores sight to a blind man or Peter and John cause a lame man to walk, we see manifestations of God, but we see equal manifestations of God when one man gives us the telephone, another the motor-car, and another wireless telegraphy. Whatever declares His power declares Him; and whatever declares Him is a means by which we press upward to the perception of His loving almightiness. The advance may be irregular but it is advance; and all advance is advance towards Him."

Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick of America holds similar views. He says:

"God is so great in his vastness that we can think of Him only in symbolic terms, but he has a near range.

"I believe we come close to God wherever there is beauty, love, integrity, truth. Often if you ask people where God is, their thoughts go shooting off among the stars; but it is deep down within human life that we find God. God is love and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. The simple truth is that we discover the Divine wherever love illumines life.

"No one can believe in all of God. Believe in as much of God as you can—that is the way to start. Begin with the beauty of Beethoven or Shelley or of a bird singing in the trees. Could blind chance create symmetry and rhythm and light and colour and melody? Or begin with the mathematics of the universe. The great mathematicians—Euclid, Newton, Einstein—did not create mathematical order; they uncovered the truth that was already there; or begin with the great character of the men and women who have made this world a better place for the human family to live in. They too, are the near range of God."

Eminent scientists who ponder over the serious problems of life find God's revelations or manifestations everywhere. As if echoing the principles of Vibhuti Yoga, A. H. Compton, writes in *The Cosmos of A. H. Compton*: "Now let us think of God as a hero to be admired and emulated. Our heroes have always been our gods who have helped us in shaping our attitudes and actions. We see in our great men the embodiment of some spirit we admire and want to share. I remember how my father reasoned out his own Christian philosophy and used it to fortify and stabilize his life; and trying to follow his footsteps, I became an ancestor worshipper. I have an older brother whose interest and achievement in science have inspired me to do likewise, and I have sought and carefully weighed his counsel when facing crucial decisions. The general with whom I was most intimately associated in the effort to win the war has become to me the personification of complete patriotism... From earliest childhood I have learned to see in Jesus the supreme example of one who loves his neighbhours and expresses that love in actions that count, who knows that people can find their souls by losing themselves in something of great value...... It would do violence to common usage to say, except in the extreme case of the One whom I hold as my supreme example, that these men are my gods. But it is correct to say that for me they all represent certain aspects of the Divine spirit, and by knowing them I come to know my God."

We look to God to reveal Himself in miracles, supernatural events, prophets and incarnations, sylvan solitudes and mountain caves. But all the time He is revealing Himself to us in the beauties of nature, in piety and goodness, in nobility of character, in works of imagination and art, in discoveries and inventions, in feats of adventure, exploration and self-sacrifice, in the great as well as in the poor, the lowly and the lost. We ignore the God near at hand while seeking Him far away.

According to the popular and narrow view of religion the seeker of God can cultivate spirituality only by means of special sadhanas like meditation or *japa.* A broader notion of religion requires that the aspirant should not only be devout but virtuous and honourable. The Gita puts forward a still wider concept of religion. The aspirant's curriculum should include the pursuit not only of God and goodness but also of greatness in his own field of endeavour.

Following the Vedas and the Gita, let us produce Vibhutis in all walks of life—not only great saints and ascetics but also pre-eminent seers, statesmen, scientists, heroes, industrialists and philanthropists.

CHAPTER 15

SUPER-NATURALISM IN RELIGION

SCIENCE is solely concerned with the study of natural phenomena which all can observe and verify. It tries to explain them by discovering the universal and eternal laws which govern them; and having discovered the laws, it makes use of them to obtain desirable results and prevent their opposites.

Its constant effort is to bring the unknown within the domain of the known, to turn the super-natural into natural. This is one momentous contribution of science to the philosophic thought of the world: that many events hitherto regarded as super-natural can be explained in terms of natural laws and many extraordinary things, which could only be produced very rarely and with great difficulty by super-natural means, can be obtained more easily and abundantly by natural, scientific and objective methods. Thus telepathy, clairvoyance and astral travel have their scientific counterparts in telephony, wireless, television and aerial flights.

Religion, on the other hand, is dominated by its super-natural parts, which tend to oust all the rest. The concentration obtained by focusing the mind on the super-natural. or by emptying it of all thought, is of a much higher order than that which can be acquired by attending to study or other work. The knowledge derived from revelations, mystic visions or super-conscious states is the best and only true knowledge, which remains unshaken even when contradicted by the knowledge obtained by other means, such as observation, study, reflection, experiment or discussion.

Whatever a man's achievement in literature, science or public service, he remains a dwarf compared to one who enjoys mystic visions and occult powers. The bliss of mystic experiences and super-conscious states is super-sensuous, pure and perfect, the only bliss worth caring for, while any happiness one may get even by doing a golden deed of heroism, self-sacrifice or philanthrophy is, by comparison, false, imperfect and transient. By glorifying mystic, extra-sensory and super-natural phenomena, religion, wittingly or unwittingly, belittles the good and great things which are invaluable in daily life.

Value of Super-natural Phenomena

We have already seen that mystic experiences and super-natural powers are not synonymous with spirituality, being common alike to saints, demons and ordinary persons. It is true that super-natural powers have sometimes been used for the good of others. But they cannot replace our usual methods of getting our requirements of food, clothing, education, transport or communication. Perhaps their greatest merit is their rarity. If many people could read others' thoughts, invisibly observe others' doings or remove others' belongings, life would be thrown completely out of gear. Further, if we could meet all our needs without any exertion, we might soon be destroyed by our own boredom and inertia.

Lobsang Rampa, a Tibetan priest-surgeon of top rank in the spiritual hierarchy and possessing many super-natural powers, writes in his book *The Third Eye*: "It is a very good thing that invisibility is beyond more than the very, very few... There are men in Tibet who can become invisible at will ... I could not make myself invisible inspite of my most earnest efforts... We Tibetans believe that every one before the Fall of Man had the ability to travel in the astral, see by clairvoyance, telepathize and levitate. Our version of that Fall is that man abused the occult powers and used them for self-interest instead of for the development of mankind as a whole."

In Tibet we have a concrete example of a land of miracles and mysticism, of super-conscious states and occult powers. Do we want to turn the world into a vast glorified Tibet?

Faith, it is said, can move mountains. True enough, we use faith more often than we realize. Our dealings with others and our actions concerned with the future are largely guided by faith or belief. But faith, to be fruitful, must be based on facts, knowledge and reason and must lead to appropriate action. Faith cannot be used as a substitute for knowledge, reason or effort, which are all necessary in human life.

Revelations

Revelations are not limited to religious matters or to religious persons. Every new idea in science, art or elsewhere is a revelation or inspiration. Though our knowledge is still far from complete, we know that the new idea is actually formed in the seeker's mental factory, as butter is churned out of milk or a new substance is made from its raw materials. For any worthwhile inspiration the conditions are: keen interest in the topic, collection of relevant facts and information and deep reflection on them.

Sometimes the new idea comes during the course of active search, study or reflection. But very often it appears much later, after a period of waiting, when the mind is turned elsewhere, for example, when the person is asleep, half awake, out on a walk or shaving. Likewise, new ideas can arise in a state of super-consciousness or uncommon spiritual elevation. But this is only a matter of coincidence and does not mean that any one particular state is more favourable for ideation than another.

Any new idea, at its emergence, is usually raw and unfinished. It needs to be developed, polished, perfected, thoroughly tested and put in a usable shape before it can be accepted as an addition to knowledge. Most of the new ideas that people get have to be discarded for one reason or another. The world recognises only those inspirations which can stand the tests of reason, experiment and utility.

Inspiration cannot be its own judge. It can only be validated by objective, independent and varied tests. Moreover, many ideas which were considered inspirations at the time of discovery have been superseded by better ones discovered later on.

These conditions, which have been well established by research, are equally applicable to revelations and inspirations in the religious field. In spiritual matters, contrary to common belief, the price of inspiration is not just holiness but profound knowledge of the particular topic, deep reflection, vision and foresight. Further, since we are only concerned here with past revelations, every one of them has to be judged by its historical results.

Every doctrine which has benefited humanity in general deserves to be nurtured. On the other hand, no dogma and no interpretation of scriptural injunctions, which has divided mankind, obstructed the advance of knowledge, made men irresponsible or led to violence and bloodshed, can be accepted as a revelation from God or as a true interpretation of His intentions and wishes.

Effects of Super-naturalism

Thanks to super-naturalism, religion is largely otherworldly. Its God, the Holy Father in heaven, can only be approached through prayer and meditation and so the more time one devotes to such activities, the more rapid one's progress. As a reward for faith and worship, man is offered, in one hand, a gay life and, in the other, easy salvation after death. There is no need or incentive for him to be good or attentive to his responsibilities.

Some religions claim a unique position for themselves on account of the unique revelations and exceptional powers granted to their founders by God Himself. The effects of this doctrine of uniqueness have been disastrous, for it starts by being egoistic and intolerant and ends by being violent and destructive. Whatever is in my scripture comes from God and is always true. Whatever is outside it, is not worth knowing. My scripture is an authority, whether the subject be physics, mathematics, flying or cooking. Whatever it says must be accepted as gospel truth, for God cannot mislead the believers. As an inevitable consequence of this mentality, religion has set its face against all reason and new truth. As long as it could, it blocked the progress of science and medicine, even with inquisitions and persecutions. While everything else in the world is moving fast, religion remains static, the last resort of harmful superstitions, outmoded beliefs and irrational dogmas.

Perhaps the worst effect of super-naturalism is that it breeds religious egoism and nationalism. The resulting inter-religious conflicts have brought suffering and death, instead of life and light, to millions of people. It has not been realized that religions fighting with one another cancel one another, whereas if they work together, they can transform this planet into paradise.

Conclusion

The whole subject of occult powers is shrouded in mystery but is being investigated by research workers to determine the conditions under which they can be cultivated and put to use at will. Meanwhile it is necessary to define the respective functions and jurisdictions of the natural and the super-natural. So far as our physical and material problems are concerned, for example, food shortage and epidemics, science has established that they are best solved by natural and scientific means. Religion, however, is a field where the natural and the super-natural overlap and neither, by itself, is sufficient. Nevertheless, even granting for the sake of argument, the superiority of super-natural powers and super-conscious states, it should be recognised that they are neither possible nor desirable, and are, in fact, only a distraction, for the common folk.

For centuries, religions have been trying super-natural methods for remaking the world. But success has eluded them, because in the world of nature, in which we live, changes and improvements can only be effected by natural means. It is well to remember that the super-natural is not a negation, but an extension and refinement, of the natural. The natural and the super-natural are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. The way to the super-natural lies through the natural and there is no better training ground for the super-natural than the world of nature.

Much of the antagonism between science and religion would disappear and religion would become a real ennobling force in the world if, taking a cue from science, it makes greater use of natural, rational and pragmatic methods to achieve its ends.

It is time for the religion of the common man to turn its attention a *little* from faith to knowledge; from worship by thoughts and words to worship by deeds; from supernatural powers to super-excellence in one's profession; from individual salvation to general good; from the far distant and almost unattainable goal to practical, preparatory and immediately beneficial steps; from mystic experiences and super-conscious states to personal goodness. While praying to the Lord of Nature for peace, salvation or visions of God, let us also pray for a noble character and for strength and wisdom to do our best at all times and in all circumstances.

Secularization of religion is a prerequisite for the spiritualization of man.

CHAPTER 16

THE FULLNESS OF WORSHIP

Many Facets of God

In traditional worship it is customary for a minute fraction of a man's personality to address itself to a very small part of God, for a few minutes daily or weekly, and only by methods which are largely mental. On the other hand, the fullness of worship requires the whole (or as much as possible) of God to be worshipped, all the time, by all available means and by the whole (or as much as possible) of a man's being.

Light sometimes behaves as waves and sometimes as particles. The electron, the smallest particle of matter, shows a similar dual character. It is obvious that physical reality possesses several distinct aspects, which, though seemingly contradictory and mutually exclusive, are really complementary. No wonder, God, too, has many facets, which require different kinds of worship. Thus there is the actionless Purusha, the unmanifest and quiescent God, Who is correctly worshipped by prayer, meditation and remembrance, because there is no other way of approaching Him. But God has several other aspects, for Whose worship such purely mental methods are quite unsuitable. For example, God in the form of Prakriti, which is inanimate and unfeeling, cannot be moved by prayers or petitions but only by compliance with its laws.

To worship the Creator-Preserver God, Who is deeply interested in His creation, we should beautify the world with our works and our presence. The God of Wisdom has to be adored by acquiring wisdom; of Goodness, by being good. The Lord Who is the Enjoyer of austerities and sacrifices expects us to undertake the former for self-improvement and the latter for public benefit. The God Who is love cannot be satisfied unless we love our fellow-beings, whom He loves with all the ardour and tenderness of a father, mother and friend. "Rejoice in the good of all creatures," enjoins the Gita (V/25, XII/4). "Love your neighbour as yourself," teaches the Bible.

The worship of the God Who is the Ruler of the universe requires that we live as law-abiding citizens in His kingdom and pay proper attention to all the responsibilities He has given us. Then there is also the Manifest God, Who walks the earth in the form of bird, beast and man and Who can only be worshipped by loving service and useful gifts to them. According to the Gita, "Vasudeva is all" (VII/19) and "He who, established in unity, worships Me abiding in all creatures, that yogi lives in Me, whatever his mode of living" (VI/31). Service of man is the service of God, declares the Bible.

The Gita has recognised all these aspects of God, pointed out their partial nature and declared that the highest Godhead, Purushottama, the Person Supreme, Divine, includes but is greater than each and all of his parts (VIII/20, XV/17). It is particularly necessary to notice two important aspects of God—if only because they have been consistently neglected in our country—namely, the God appearing as the manifest creation and the Lord of Prakriti from whom all the activity of the world has emanated (XV/4).

Therefore, the conventional worship by sacred works, like prayer and meditation, must be supplemented with worship by the secular works which every one has to do to maintain himself and his family. These two kinds of pooja—by mental and by practical works—are complementary and their mixture, in varying proportions, is required by the common people. The Gita has laid very great stress on this twofold nature of worship. "Therefore at all times remember Me and fight (VIII/7). Remembrance of God by various means is to be practised until it becomes habitual and spontaneous and the mind remains saturated with God at all times, whether consciously or unconsciously. Along with this, all secular works too must be performed as adoration of the Almighty. "Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou eatest, whatsoever thou givest, whatsoever thou doest of austerity, do thou that as an offering unto Me." This, indeed, is the vital condition: to do all works—whether sacred or secular—as an offering or sacrifice to God, for his sake and pleasure or for the good of his creatures. Only so can any work be transformed into true worship of God. Only so can a man approach the Gita's ideal of whole-time or constant yoga (*Nitya Yoga* or *Satata Yoga*).

It is a happy augury that the need to do all the works of daily life as worship of God is being increasingly recognised. Thus Sister Nivedita wrote, "No distinction henceforth between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce... Study is austerity more costly and more precious than a fast. Mutual aid is better than any pooja." According to Mervyn Stockwood, Bishop of Southwark, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Such a conception of the Church's task cancels division between sacred and secular, because every thing falls within its scope,—personal and public morality, sociology, industrial and agricultural planning, health and education, politics, the arts and leisure. There is nothing more religious about attending Church than there is in being present at a trade union meeting, going to a concert or driving a tractor. The determining factor is the motive."

"The person," wrote biologist J. S. Haldane, "who is doing in all sincerity the duties that present themselves to him, in whatever station he occupies, is in direct contact with Spiritual Reality."

The Gospel of Duty

Man stands in several different relations to God—as devotee, son, friend and lover. These roles are all very heart-warming, but no less important is his role as an employee of God's government on earth. God has given everyone some work to do, which he must do to the best of his ability and to the satisfaction of the Master. A man's value to God ultimately depends on how well he performs the tasks entrusted to him.

Man's responsibility as a worker and producer has been highlighted in many important pronouncements of the Gita. The burden of its song, yoga, has been defined as efficiency in work, while Vibhuti Yoga requires superlative efficiency. "Therefore, always efficiently do your duty without attachment" (III/19). "There is nothing in the three worlds for Me to do, nor is there anything worth attaining unattained by Me; yet I continue to work. Should I not engage in action, unwearied at any time, great harm will come to the world; for men follow My path in all matters. If I do not perform action, these worlds will perish. As the unwise act with attachment, so should the wise man act without attachment for maintaining the world order." (III/22-25). Man should dedicate his labours as well as their fruits to the welfare of the world. By doing so he not only benefits humanity but also cultivates unselfishness, which in the words of Swami Vivekananda, "is salvation itself; for the man within dies and God alone remains."

To leave no room for doubt the Gita adds that doing work without attachment man attains the Supreme and mentions the examples of Janaka and other wise men who reached perfection through action alone (III/19-20). In the

Bhagavata Sri Krishna declared, "Of all living beings, those who do good to others through their lives, wealth, wisdom and their words, they alone justify their birth." In the Gita he taught the converse lesson with great force. "Any one who cooks for himself alone, who does not make his due contribution to the well-being and progress of the world, is a thief, eats sin and lives in vain" (III/12, 13, 16). Inspite of all this, in our country man's role as a workman of God is generally overlooked or belittled and the highest ambition of many devotees is to pass their days as a beggar at God's doorsteps.

"The Gita's injunction," says Sri Aurobindo in his *Essays on the Gita,* "is to worship the Divine by our own work, *Swakarmana*... To worship him with our inner and outer activities, to make our whole life a sacrifice of works to the Highest is to prepare ourselves to become one with him in all our will and substance and nature."

"You need not absorb yourself," said Sant Jnaneswar, "in religious ceremonies. You need not pain the body... Your obligatory duties are the one sacrifice you should offer. Do your duties cheerfully and without desire for fruits... The performance of duty is the only sacrifice worth practising... Duties properly done will fulfil all your desires."

A devotee of God should not only be unattached and selfless but also capable (*daksha,* XII/16) and diligent. He should maintain his body and mind in a state of fitness. He should keep up his zest for life and labour. He should cultivate and, if possible, add to knowledge. He should do his best at all times. He should make his work-offering to God the very best he is capable of. He who is faithless in his own duties cannot be true to God. On the other hand, it has been well said:

What must I do to be for ever known?
Thy duty ever.

Who does the best his circumstance allows,
Does well, acts nobly; angels could do no more.

The basic idea of Karma Yoga is that union with God can be attained through works undertaken in a spirit of self-sacrifice or for public good. To bring home this lesson Sri Krishna has specifically declared that the all pervading Infinite is always present in sacrifice (III/15) and repeated that He is personally present in every act of sacrifice and in every part of it (IX/16). By this Sri Krishna has given the assurance that any one, when he is preparing for or actually doing his duties or other works beneficial to society, is in direct touch with God, as if he were engaged in prayer or meditation. Not only so, but such activities fulfil all the desires of a man's heart (III/11-12).

"O man, whosoever thou art," wrote Sister Nivedita, "who goest forth to work, in this hour of the nation's need, clasp to thy heart the weapon of thy service. Let all thy faculties converge on embracing the task. Let thy thought, day and night, be on that which thou hast taken in hand to do. Let character be thy supreme guide, perfection of service thy one dream."

Professional Work—the Best Medium of Worship

The Gita has repeatedly taught that by performing one's duty efficiently one attains the highest perfection, the Supreme. But what is that duty—or the most important part of that duty—which brings about this consummation? According to the popular version of religion, the duty (Swadharma or Swakarma) which leads to perfection is only the religious duty but if we read Sri Krishna correctly, it is primarily the professional duty. For in the last Chapter of the Gita he says: Serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness, and also uprightness, wisdom, knowledge of God, belief in God, are the Brahmana duty, born of his own nature.

Prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity, and also not fleeing from battle, generosity, the nature of a ruler, are the Kshatriya duty, born of his own nature. Ploughing, protection of kine, and trade are the Vaishya duty, born of his own nature. Action of the nature of service is the Shudra duty, born of his own nature. Man reacheth perfection by each being intent on his own duty. He from whom is the evolution of all beings, by whom all this is pervaded, by worshipping Him with his own duty, a man attains perfection." (XVIII/42-44).

These verses, which are among the choicest gems of the Gita, have propounded the revolutionary idea that Swadharma or Swakarma, the most important duties peculiar to an individual, by performing which he attains the highest perfection, are not necessarily the religious duties but his professional duties. In the case of Brahmins, because their whole-time vocation is the study, practice and teaching of religion, the religious duties are the most important and the way to God. But in the case of all others, who constitute the vast majority of people, the most important duties are the secular duties of their own profession, which are their proper way to God and should have precedence over the purely religious duties. In short, a man's means of livelihood is also his principal medium of God-realization. For spiritual advancement it is not necessary to renounce or reduce one's professional work (for the sake of special religious excercises), but to do it more devotedly, more efficiently and more disinterestedly.

For spiritual progress the sanctification of professional work is indispensable. Nay, a man's profession is his best training-ground for this purpose, because it absorbs the bulk of his time, thought and energy, and is his ruling passion and his chief means of getting money, power, friendship, status, success and happiness in life. "Your calling," writes Swett Marden in his inspiring book *Rising in the World*, "should be the great school of life, the great man-developer, character-builder, that should broaden, deepen and round out into symmetry, harmony and beauty all the God-given faculties within you."

"What a direct and easy way to Moksha!", says Acharya Vinoba in his *Talks on the Gita*. "One's ordinary life, what one does as Swadharma, one's acts of service, why not make this itself a Yajna, a sacrifice? Where is the need for any other Yagas or Yajnas? Regard as Yajna, and continue to perform the ordinary work of service that you do every day. This is the royal road."

Obviously, verses 42 to 44 quoted above have recounted only the most important duties of the four Varnas and these are their professional duties. But they have another remarkable implication, which does not appear to have been noticed so far. Knowledge of God and belief in God are expressly mentioned among the principal duties of Brahmins. So their omission from the chief duties of the others in the very next two verses cannot but be regarded as deliberate and significant. This, however, does not mean that non-religious workers have no religious duties. It simply means that religious exercises have top priority only for religious workers. But all the rest must give primacy to the secular duties of their respective professions and should not sacrifice them to religious or domestic duties. The *Manu Smriti* has brought this out very clearly in the case of rulers. "Let the king or president retain a chaplain and spiritual teacher to perform Homa and Yajnas and other religious duties for him in the palace; and let him always devote himself to the business of the State. To devote himself day and night to the affairs of the State without allowing anything to go out of order is the highest duty of a king; aye, this is his worship, this is his communion."

The same thought has been voiced by Sister Nivedita in her inspiring book *Religion and Dharma*. "The soldier has to learn that obedience is his form of prayer. To be doing japam when one ought to be resting and, consequently, to be sleepy when one ought to be at work, is not a meritorious condition. No *punya* that way! The sunny-heartedness of the child, on the other hand, ready to forget all about the mother, if its mother tells it to run away and play, is true bhakti and better than many *pranamas*."

Many kinds of works are necessary and useful for the maintenance of life. They must all be done by some one or other; and properly performed, they all become worship of God. No doubt, they differ in remuneration and social standing; but being all assignments from God, they are equally acceptable to Him. The spiritual value of any work does not depend on its nature but on the perfection and dedication with which it is done; nor even on the measure of success achieved but on the actual transformation effected in the real man. The cause of religion is not advanced by insisting that only religious pursuits can lead to spirituality, for if they are holy, the other professions are no less important.

In fact, the Shastras have made it clear that the most important profession is *Raj Dharma,* the vocation of the ruler-administrator-soldier; for without a good, strong, efficient and incorruptible government, without capable, just and honest administrators, without a brave soldiery ready to lay down their lives in defence of their country, or in defence of the right, the weak and the oppressed, there can be no peace, no law and order, and no chance for agriculture, industry, trade, learning or even religion to flourish. Moreover, if large numbers of people, instead of worshipping God by the pursuit of their own profession, turn to the religious profession, because it ranks highest, society would stand to perish for want of the necessities of life.

For the well-being and progress of mankind there must be diversification of work, division of labour and specialization. Therefore, every one worships the Lord best by doing his best in the work for which nature has equipped him, which falls to his lot in life or is demanded of him by the exigencies of the times. This is the Essential Services Act of God's government on earth.

'*Another's Duty is Dangerous*'

In the Gita Sri Krishna says, "Howsoever men approach Me even so do I welcome them. The path men take from every side is mine." (IV/II). But how is a man to choose one out of the many paths open to him? The Gita's answer, as we have seen, is that a man's profession is his best way to God, peace and perfection; and this profession should be chosen in accordance with his natural aptitude and ability.

A man has to keep away from evil, even forcibly; he has to practise self-restraint and moderation even in many good things like eating and amusement. But in areas where variety is necessary for society and where it is merely a question of choosing one good thing out of many, freedom of choice should be permitted so that the individual may gratify his taste, use and develop his special talents and at the same time render his best possible service to society. Modern thinkers have realized the importance of being guided by one's natural inclinations and gifts in choosing a profession. "Be what nature intended you for", said Sydney Smith," and you will succeed. Be anything else and you will be ten thousand times worse than nothing." Similarly, Bulwer wrote, "One of the first principles of success in life is so to regulate our career as rather to turn our physical constitutions and natural inclinations to good account than to endeavour to counteract the one and oppose the other."

Many years ago Sri Krishna recognised the need for regulating one's nature (Swabhava) in certain matters and of conforming to it in certain others. As regards the latter, he declared "All beings follow their nature; even a wise man behaves in conformity with his own nature. What can restraint avail?" (III/33). In particular, that vocation is best for a man which is chosen along the lines of his interests and abilities, which gives him pleasure and at the same time develops his faculties and benefits society. Nay, other professions, however respectable, paying or fashionable, are dangerous. "Better one's own duty, though destitute of merit, than the duty of another well discharged. Even death in the performance of one's own duty brings blessedness. The duty of another is full of danger." (III/35). "A wise man should not unsettle the mind of the ignorant attached to action, but should get them to perform *all their duties,* duly performing them himself." (III/26).

As if commenting on these verses of the Gita, Swett Marden wrote: "When we try to do that for which we are unfitted, we are not working along the line of our strength but of our weakness; our will power and enthusiasm become demoralized; we do half-work, botched work, lose confidence in ourselves and conclude that we are dunces because we cannot accomplish what others do; the whole tone of life is demoralized and lowered because we are out of place."

God's kingdom is ill-served by a doctor who is fond of house building but poor in medicine; and by a judge, engineer or farmer who is expert in meditation but incompetent, careless or corrupt in his own profession. Likewise holy men, ministers and administrators who run after wealth are a threat to society, as are also traders, teachers and managers who dabble in scriptural lore but are inattentive to their professional responsibilities. Such men cannot be dear to the Lord.

"Each man", writes Sri Aurobindo, "has a Swadharma, a law of his inner being which he must observe, find out and follow... A man who devotes himself to his own natural work in life acquires spiritual perfection... if he can make it a worship of the Spirit of this creation and dedicate it sincerely to the Master of the universe from whom is all impulse to action... But a work not naturally one's own, even though it may be well performed, may look better from the outside... or may lead to more success in life, is still inferior as a means of subjective growth... One's own natural work is better, even if it looks from some other point of view defective."

The Gita requires every one to acquire super-excellence, or at least excellence, in his own profession. But knowledge is growing fast and all arts and crafts are becoming highly specialized. So no one can do justice to his profession, much less become an expert in it, without giving it whole-hearted and undivided attention. Obviously, men of outstanding ability in different fields of activity cannot be produced by a nation which believes that perfection and liberation are only attainable through prayer, japa and meditation.

The Quality of Worship

One of the most remarkable precepts of the Gita is to renounce the fruit of actions. Unfortunately, it has not received the attention it deserves. Many commentators have interpreted renunciation of the fruit of actions as the giving up of the desire for or attachment to the fruit, while the real intention of Sri Krishna is the actual renunciation of the fruit, the sharing of one's acquisitions and possessions liberally with the needy, using them for public good and for causes dear to the Lord.

The Gita has laid great stress on this lesson and taught it repeatedly and in many ways. Man has no right to the fruit of his labours (II/47). Poor and wretched are those who crave for fruit. (II/49). He who does his duty and does not seek its fruit is a sannyasi as well as a yogi. (VI/1). Renunciation of the fruit of actions is better than meditation and is, in fact, the best of all sadhanas, which brings peace immediately. (XII/12). As this dictum of Sri Krishna appears to run counter to the popular belief in the supremacy of prayer, worship and meditation, it is necessary to examine it closely.

As a man lives and works, as he prays and meditates, he acquires physical, mental and emotional energy, knowledge, maybe wealth, along with powers and abilities of various kinds. Even after meeting his own requirements he is left with a considerable surplus of resources, which cannot remain idle or inactive for long. For all these things have a strong natural tendency to find an outlet or outlets in action. Their accumulation, if controlled and consciously directed into beneficent channels, will be a blessing both to the individual and to society; otherwise it will run riot, causing devastation and destruction all round.

A man leads a very austere life, abstains from worldly works and interests and applies himself to religious pursuits. As a result, he gets many material and spiritual benefits. All this is excellent, but it is not the end of the road. For these gains themselves raise a new problem for him: what to do with the fruits of his sadhanas? The rewards of sadhanas have no intrinsic power to compel their recipient to use them only for good purposes. The man of religion is free to use his gifts, whether natural or acquired, whatever *punya* he collects, for selfish or anti-social purposes, and if he does so he turns into an evil genius.

It is common experience that many so-called religious persons are actually hypocrites and self-seekers in disguise. They use prayer and worship as a substitute for right conduct, sometimes as a cloak or even support for their wickedness. Mythology furnishes even clearer examples of the misuse of powers derived from religious pursuits. Hiranyakashipu and Ravana, as a result of long years of prayer and penance, became super-demons and indulged in all sorts of atrocities against fellow-beings. As a reward for his religious exercises, Bhasmasura got a boon from Lord Siva that any one on whose head Bhasmasura placed his hand would be immediately burnt down to ashes. And no sooner had he got this power than he rushed to try it on the head of Lord Siva himself who had granted him the boon! King Vishwamitra, taking a fancy to the divine cow of sage Vashishtha, spent years in prayers and secured many celestial weapons as a gift from lord Brahma, and promptly used them against the saint in order to seize the cow. Many others prayed for specific objects and had their wish granted without gaining in spirituality. Many angels of western religions, who lived in heaven and passed their days in prayer, worship and service of God, suddenly rebelled against Him and turned into devils, the tempters and corrupters of mankind and enemies of God.

It is clear that the fruits of sadhanas contribute to a man's further spiritual progress only when they are dedicated to the welfare of society. This is why Sri Krishna enjoins: "Acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity and all other duties must be performed at all events. They are purifiers (even) of the wise. But even these works should be performed abandoning attachment and fruit. This is My considered and best opinion." (XVIII/5,6). The beneficial effects of sadhanas cannot be assimilated, worked off or transferred by doing more sadhana, but only by works of selfless service. The higher a man rises and the larger his stock of *punya,* the greater his responsibility to enrich society by his works and his example. The duty of self-giving is inseparable from man till the last breath of his life. This is why renunciation of the fruit of all actions—even of religious actions—has been accorded by Sri Krishna a very special, indeed a unique, place among all sadhanas. It is the last phase of all sadhanas—their crown and culmination.

In the ultimate analysis a man's spiritual standing depends not so much on the amount of sadhana performed, nor even on what he has gained from it, as on what he does with his spirituality. We have to face the fact that at every step in life a religious person has an option to use his spirituality either for the good of others or for self-inflation and self-aggrandisement. No wonder, the quest for God has been described as unending, and even hopeless.

The traditional belief that prayer and meditation automatically and invariably make a man pure and pious is thus seen to be groundless. In fact, it is one of the major fallacies responsible for turning religion into a mockery. Our scriptures have been well aware of this. Thus in the Bhagavata Sri Krishna, talking to Uddhava, classified devotees into three grades and said: "When a man or woman worships Me with great devotion and performs his duties without any selfish motive, he or she should be known as possessed of a Sattvica nature. When they worship Me for the attainment of their desires, for the sake of wealth and blessings, they should be known as possessed of a Rajasica nature; and if they worship Me in order to do injury to others, they are of Tamasica nature."

Sri Krishna has said the same thing in the Gita. Many kinds of actions such as gifts and sacrifice, which are believed to be invariably noble and ennobling, are not necessarily so but may be sometimes Rajasica or Tamasica. Faith, the corner-stone of some religious, becomes demoniacal in men who are of a demoniacal nature. According to verses XVII/14-16 worship, japa and meditation are the austerity of body, speech and mind respectively; and austerity itself may be Sattvica, Rajasica or Tamasica. Substituting worship, japa and meditation or simply "sadhana", for 'austerity', verses XVII/17-19 may be rewritten as follows:

> The sadhana performed with supreme faith by yogis having no desire for fruit, is said to be Satttvica (XVII/17).
>
> The sadhana which is performed with the object of winning respect, honour and worship or for ostentation, or is unstable and transitory, is said to be Rajasica (XVII/13),

The sadhana done under a deluded understanding, with self-torture, or with the object of doing injury to another, is said to be Tamasica (XVII/19).

It is seen from these verses that there is nothing in sadhana itself, in its nature, quality or quantity, which makes it Sattvica, Rajasica or Tamasica. In other words, sadhana is spiritually neutral. The decisive factors in spirituality are the aspirant's motives and actions, which can turn even devotion, japa and meditation, fasts and vigils into Rajasica or Tamasica. Holiness, piety and goodness are acquired by worshipping the Manifest God appearing in the form of bird, beast and man. Prayer and worship are made Sattvica only by altruistic living and by being devoted to causes bigger than one's own petty self.

The Gita has also stressed this lesson in an omnibus pronouncement classifying all works and all workers into three grades. (XVIII/23-28)

The crux of the whole matter is that when a man has resolved to improve himself, prayer and worship stimulate his spiritual development. On the other hand, no matter how much a man prays, meditates or sings the glories of God, his spiritual progress is out of the question so long as he is satisfied with himself, so long as his motives are egocentric and his actions wicked. Worship is incomplete if it ignores the God in man and the God in nature. Spirituality can only be acquired, tested, perfected and confirmed in the hard school of human relationships. "Righteousness", says Basil King in his book *The Conquest of Fear,* "must include every response to every high call. We must remember that all that a man does in the way of effort to be a good son, a good brother, a good husband, a good father, a good workman, a good citizen, is of the nature of slowly creeping forward. Above every other form of training of the self, this endeavour determines a man's spiritual standing and his state of worthiness."

The man who renounces the fruit of his actions lives a dedicated life, is moved by a sense of mission and labours for a cause much bigger than himself. He earns to give. He earns with a hundred hands and performs charity with a thousand hands, as exhorted by the Vedas.

"Pray, pray and pray," enjoins traditional religion. To this the Gita adds with great force, "Serve, serve, serve" and "Give, give and give". Depending on individual aptitude, opportunity and resources, some will worship the Lord chiefly with prayer and meditation, some chiefly with acts of service in their own profession and some others chiefly by works of charity.

At the end of the Bhagavata Uddhava pointedly asked Sri Krishna the best mode of worship for common people by which they may attain Him easily and effortlessly. Sri Krishna, in his reply, distilled the essence of religion and philosophy in these memorable words: "To regard Me (God) as the one present in all beings, to look upon all beings as Myself (God) in thought, word and deed is, I think, the best of all methods of worship."

CHAPTER 17

THE IDEAL MAN

There is a general belief among the followers of some religions that as soon as a man has taken to their own particular religion, his spiritual destiny becomes assured and all that he has to do is to observe the rituals laid down for him.

But the sages of India have never subscribed to the view that a man wins salvation simply by calling himself a Hindu or Vedantin. On the contrary, they require every one to earn his freedom, to be worthy of it and to check up for himself, from time to time, what progress he is actually making as a result of his sadhana. They have laid down clear yardsticks for such evaluation.

The recountal of the marks of the ideal or good man has been a favourite theme of the religious literature of India. These descriptions remind the aspirant of the good qualities he must build into his character by diligent practice.

The Ideal Man of the Gita

The Gita has drawn several pictures of the ideal man, using different captions, such as the man of steady intellect, the ideal yogi, the man of knowledge and the ideal devotee. In addition, it has a whole chapter explaining the distinction between divine and demoniacal properties.

According to the Gita, he who does the work he ought to do and does not seek its fruit is a sannyasin as well as a yogi, not he who does no work and does not attend to his duties.

The ideal man is a worker as well as renouncer and devotee. He develops his talents to the utmost and works tirelessly, not for selfish ends, but for the good of society and as worship of the Lord. He shares the fruits of his labours liberally with others who need them.

He does his best at all times and whatever comes out of his hands is a piece of art, done to a perfect finish and with touches of originality.

He is fired with the spirit of renunciation and lives in the world like a lotus in water, loving everything but attached to none. He regards all his possessions as gifts of God and holds them in trust on His behalf.

He is also a devotee of God and worships Him not only mentally but also with his works.

Moreover, his adoration is offered not only to the unknowable God in heaven but also—and chiefly—to the Lord manifested as bird, beast and man. He has his desires and passions well under control. He is even-minded and self-composed, nay, full of joy, in all circumstances.

The Ideal Man of the Yoga Vashishtha

The *Yoga Vashishta,* too, presents a brilliant portrayal of the qualities of the liberated soul (Jeevan Mukta). "Pleasures do not delight, pains do not distress him. Deep, violent and continued states of pleasure or pain do not produce in him the feeling of like or dislike.

"Although outwardly engaged in worldly actions, he has no attachment in his heart to any object whatsoever. His conduct does not annoy anybody; he behaves like an ideal citizen and a friend of all.

"Externally he is very busy but he is very calm and quiet at heart. He is free from the restrictions of caste, creed, station in life, custom and scriptures. He rests undisturbed in Supreme Bliss.

"He does not work for himself. He is ever happy and does not hang his joy on anything else.

"His face is always cheerful. He behaves with his fellow-beings as the occasion demands, without the least strain on his mind. He plays like a child in the company of children; he is a youth among the young: and he acts as an old man in the company of the aged. He is full of courage in a party of courageous people; and shares the misery of the miserable.

"There is nothing which he has to achieve. He, therefore, performs and gives up actions without much concern, like a child.

"He never feels despondent, proud, agitated, cast-down, troubled or elated. He is full of cleverness and magnanimity even when surrounded by enemies.

"He regards his activities as a part of the cosmic movement and performs them without any personal desire. He never hankers after the pleasures that are not in his hand, but enjoys all those he has. The idea of 'I' and 'Mine,' of something to be achieved and something to be avoided, has completely died within him. Even doing all sorts of actions, the liberated one is in Samadhi. He is a great worker (*Maha Karta*).

"He works without anxiety, egoistic feeling, pride or impurity of heart. He is a great enjoyer (*Maha Bhakta*).

"He does not discard the pleasures he has got nor desires the pleasures that he has not got. He equally enjoys old age, death, misery, poverty and ruling over an empire.

"He does not make any of the natural functions of his body paralysed for want of proper exercise. His body is a kingdom to him, over which he rules wisely and well. He keeps it healthy and does not starve it of the appropriate requirements.

"The life of the sage who has realized his divinity is really the happiest life. From him goodness is scattered all round. Having seen him, having heard about him, having met with him, and having remembered him, all creatures feel delighted. He has no longer any struggle for livelihood. The guardian angels of the world protect and support him, as they do the entire cosmos."

"The conduct of saintly and wicked persons," says Tulsidas in his immortal poem *Rama Charita Manasa,* "is analogous to that of sandalwood and the axe. The axe cuts down a sandal tree, while the latter perfumes the axe by imparting its own virtue (fragrance) to it. Saints, as a rule, have no hankering for the pleasures of sense and are the very mines of amiability and other virtues. They grieve to see others in distress and rejoice at the sight of others' joy. They are even-minded and look upon none as their enemy. Free from vanity and passion, they are conquerors of greed, anger and fear. Giving honour to all, they are modest themselves...

"The wicked, on the other hand, are hostile without purpose even to the friendly; others' loss is their own gain. They delight in others' desolation and wail over their prosperity. In splendour they emulate the god of fire and in anger they vie with the god of death. They are rich in crime and vice. Their advancement augurs ill for others' interest; their decline alone is propitious for the world. They lay down their very life in order to be able to harm others...

"There is no virtue like doing good to others and no evil like oppressing others."

Conclusion

It will be noticed that the ideal man is not required to acquire super-natural powers but to develop his natural abilities to the highest degree; not to enjoy super-conscious states but to make his conscious states sources of bliss for himself as well as for others; not to see fleeting visions of God in secret or sacred places but to see and worship Him everywhere and in all creatures.

He should cultivate the homely virtues which are cherished all over the world and are beneficial to every one in daily life: super-excellence or at least excellence in one's profession, friendliness, kindness, compassion, truth, fearlessness, integrity, justice, non-violence, vigour, fortitude, patience, forgiveness, reliability, co-operativeness, gentleness; simplicity; freedom from greed, anger, malice and self-importance and absence of pride, arrogance, fickleness and crookedness.

The ideal man is not necessarily one who has attained perfection but one who is conscious of his weaknesses and is sincerely striving to improve himself. Having set out on the right path, he is bound to reach the goal sooner or later. It is to be specially noted that even a yogi or devotee may be Sattvic, Rajasic or Tamasic, depending on his motives and actions.

Salvation and liberation are the accepted aims of human life. But man must qualify for them while making his sojourn on earth as happy as possible. Whether by yoga or by works, by study or by devotion, by worship or by renunciation, he must try to make himself better and better, more and more like God, every day, knowing full well that perfection, the highest spirituality, is only the climax of a life dedicated to the pursuit of the Best in thought, word and deed.

To produce ideal men and women is the true aim and mission of all religions.

CHAPTER 18

THE TASK BEFORE US

We have seen that the methods and ideas of science are of great help in sifting the teachings of religion; in separating the essential from the non-essential, the rational from the irrational, the useful from the useless or harmful, the true from the false, and the universal truth from the half-truth or superstition. Thus science supports the view that all existence has evolved out of one Reality and all living things, being parts of it, are inter-knit and inter-dependent like the cells of a vast super-organism; that the physical world is ruled by Law and System without interference by super-natural beings. Similarly, an unbiased examination reveals that prayer and worship do not necessarily make any one pure, good or wise, but their fruits may be used for either good or bad purposes. It follows that only by rational husking can the religious rice be made eatable; and even this need for regular screening is brought home by a law of nature discovered recently.

It seems irreverent to discard or devalue any time-honoured dogmas of religion. But as a matter of fact this has happened time and again in the history of religion. For example, most of the Vedic rituals have fallen into disuse and even devout Christians follow only a few of the rules laid down in the Bible. Moreover, many religious precepts are mutually contradictory and the adoption of any one of them implies the rejection of all the rest. In the past all changes, all selections and rejections in religion, have been made unconsciously, haphazardly, by drift rather than deliberate planning. What is now required is to do this work methodically and in accordance with the collective wisdom and experience of mankind. As a rough and ready guide, teachings which are in conformity with reason and science, which inculcate love and unity or make man responsible for his own destiny, deserve to be cherished; those which are superfluous, irrational or harmful, which divide mankind into warring camps or put a premium on permissiveness or irresponsibility, have to be weeded out.

In pursuance of these ideas each of the major religions should prepare new, abridged and simplified editions of its holy books; one for children and adolescents, another for adults and elderly persons, and a third, a deluxe or export edition, for the use of philosophers, nonbelievers, scientists and intelligentsia all over the world. These new editions will not cover all the dogmas and doctrines of a religion but only the best, selected with care and discrimination, only the concepts which have stood the test of time and can bear scrutiny by the thinking, enquiring and critical mind of the educated man of today. Condensation and simplification are indispensable in order to highlight the vital principles and bring the extensive sacred literature within the already overtaxed reading capacity of the average person.

These modernised versions of the teachings of various religions will be found to differ in respect of prophets and scriptures, mythology, customs and modes of worship. Such variety has to remain. It makes for beauty and convenience, and is necessary to cater for the infinite variations in the tastes, temperaments and abilities of human beings. But the new books will reveal a remarkable degree of unanimity in regard to eternal truths, such as the need for love and harmony, right conduct and proper performance of all duties and the basic qualifications of the ideal man. And it will be seen that the points on which all religions agree are the heart and soul of religion and quite enough to build a new heaven and a new earth.

Morality, the Key to Spirituality

There is a popular notion that spirituality is not ethics but something of a much higher dimension. This may be true but the question is whether there is any connection between the two. Obviously there must be, since we cannot think of a man being holy without being good. The real problem is to ascertain the relation between goodness and godliness. Because they are related but not identical, we have to accept that one leads to the other by a natural and inevitable process. In other words, the relation between morality and spirituality is the same as between cause and effect, the means and the end, the seed and the fruit. Godliness is the daughter of goodness, the finest flowering of the tree of morality. "The person of disciplined life," declares the Bhagavata, "gradually qualifies himself for ultimate) welfare." Maharshi Valmiki has also taught the same lesson. "Out of righteousness springs wealth. Out of righteousness springs happiness. Through righteousness one obtains everything. The world has righteousness as its essence."

Though the outward expressions of sprituality must necessarily be different in different persons, it cannot be said that the holiness of the hermit is the only true or desirable form of spirituality, the only variety which is acceptable to God or useful for society. Religion has stultified itself by giving the impression that men engaged in worldly professions, such as scientists, teachers, businessmen, lawyers and politicians, cannot attain a very high level of spirituality, however noble or dedicated their lives. And since they cannot be spiritual, it is no use trying to be so!

The outstanding feature of holiness is forgetfulness of self, a lofty spirit of renunciation, which is best acquired by practising selflessness, by becoming other-centred, in daily life. Prayer, worship and mystic experiences are helpful but only if and to the extent that they are prompted by altruistic motives and actually result in right conduct. It is well to remember that many prayers and austerities, many boons asked of gods and many worshippers of God, are essentially of a Rajasic or Tamasic character. In fact, the Gita has classified worship, japa and meditation and the Bhagavata has classified devotees into three grades—Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic. Many illustrations can be found in mythology. Inspite of all their prayers and their close association with Christ, one of his own chosen disciples denied him and another betrayed him for a paltry sum of money. Some were healed or purified by his touch or benediction, but many others who saw him and touched him did not hesitate to torment and crucify him. The devils of the western religions and the demons of Hindu mythology had all practised austerities and devotion for long years but eventually took to evil ways.

The Common Mission of Religions

So far the dominant interests of religions have been on the one hand, miracles and mysticism and, on the other, self-glorification and self-propagation. A scientific approach enables us to distinguish the real from the face value of objects and ideas; and as soon as this is done it becomes clear that the true mission of all religions is the changing of men into gods and earth into heaven, a heaven not only for the few who are wealthy, powerful or cunning or belong to a favoured group, but for all—a heaven which will be the abode of love and peace, where men will help one another in their common striving for a rich, full and perfect life.

The project of producing better men and a better society may appear ambitious, even Utopian. But the world advances only because some men see visions of a bright future and make them true. "The dreamers", writes James Allen, "are the saviours of the world. Dreams are the seedlings of reality. Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become."

There is no reason to doubt that by concerted efforts we can transform human nature and build a better society. Human nature is certainly teachable and improvable. All education presupposes and proves this. Moreover, by their own efforts many have attained spectacular heights of goodness and wisdom in the past and many are doing it today. What has been achieved by so many can be achieved by all. This, indeed, should be the main purpose of religion and the goal of all human endeavour—to make men better and better, more and more like God, every day.

We shall now consider the choice of means for the deification of man. The traditional methods, which are predominantly super-naturalistic, extra-sensory and other-worldly, are only suitable for a few and, if past experience is any guide, futile for the common folk. In fact, science has established that in vast areas of the physical universe beneficial results are obtained not by appealing to gods and angels, not through long fasts and vigils, not by mystic visions and super-conscious states, but by seeking out and complying with the relevant laws. For the great majority of people it is neither necessary nor desirable to be experts in religious sadhanas or religious lore. Their proper way to perfection is to refine their characters and develop their natural abilities by doing their daily tasks—particularly their professional duties—to the best of their ability, as an offering to God and for the good of His creatures. Both in the Gita and the Bhagavata Sri Krishna has emphasised that man attains the highest perfection by proper attention to his own Swadharma. And He has also clarified that in Swadharma the most important element is the professional duty, which is religious in the case of men of religion but secular in the case of all others.

The purpose of life is to grow into a likeness of God by acquiring personal goodness and excellence in work. This is the basis of any rational, scientific and universal religion; and insistence on it has become all the more necessary because of the challenge posed by the breath-taking advance of science. Science has given men leisure, powerful drugs, unending means of enjoyment and stupendous engines of destruction. Unless he can learn to use them wisely and well, he stands to destroy himself as well as society. Therefore his paramount need today is a version of religion which will inculcate not only worship, not only self-development through education, wealth and power, but also self-restraint, reverence for life, self-dedication, decent behaviour and benevolence.

Physically and mentally man has made considerable progress, but his animal instincts have hardly been tamed. No doubt, both in the individual and the race, moral and spiritual development starts later and is much slower in coming than the physical. But it must be admitted regretfully that these sides of man have not received so far the attention they deserve. It is high time we take active steps to stimulate the spiritual development of man, instead of leaving it to chance.

Co-operation Among Religions

Many have toyed with this idea but it has not made any headway, because the means adopted for its realization—large scale conversions at the expense of other religions—have not been correct. Here, again science shows the way: global co-operation instead of competition among religions.

Science is the wonder-worker of the modern age; and the secret of its achievements is continuing co-operation among men of science all over the world. The foremost lesson of science is that co-operation makes impossible things possible and difficult things easy. By the collaboration of many heads, hands and hearts possessing different kinds of talents and skills, human powers can be multiplied to almost any extent. Religions should take this leaf out of the book of science and place human co-operation at the centre of all their schemes for the advancement of mankind. To all the different systems of yoga we should add another—*Saha Yoga*—the yoga of combination and co-operation. It is the magic key which can unlock all treasures. The crown and fulfilment of all yogas is the ability to inspire and give co-operation in worthy causes.

Religions fighting with one another have been a curse and a disgrace to humanity and have tended to cancel one another. Nothing can bring peace or unity in the world so long as religions and their sects regard their bellicosity and nationalism as a virtue. On the other hand co-operation among and within religions will be the strongest spur to co-operation in other fields. It will be the best guarantee of world peace and human happiness. It will accomplish the greatest miracle of all times—the deification of man and the changing of our planet into paradise.

Religions joining hands with one another, with the United Nations, educationists and all well-wishers of humanity, should launch a massive programme of moral education, taking the best from all religions. As the key to true spirituality, the rules of right conduct should be systematically taught and enforced in homes, schools and religious institutions. Even in business, administration and politics there should be marks not only for cleverness but also for character.

Religions will maintain their separate identities. But mere tolerance or fellowship among them is not enough. They should activity co-operate with one another for the attainment of common, wisely-chosen objectives. Within each religion, too, there should be movements of convergence and coalescence. Catholics and Protestants Sanatanists and Arya Samajists, Shias and Sunnis, could easily come together, sink their petty differences and work in concert for the regeneration of man and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

As a modest, short-term objective we can aim at twenty per cent improvement in human nature. Two decades should suffice to bring tangible results. For within this period those who are children today will have grown up to be citizens, administrators, rulers and leaders, and if they have imbibed the true spirit of spirituality, the dawn of the Golden Age would already be in sight.

The task is, no doubt, Herculean, but there is no reason for pessimism, for in all good endeavours divine help is assured. Thus according to the Vedas God fulfils all desires of His devotees. The Gita has declared that God is personally present in all good desires and all good deeds; and Yajna, or collective effort for worthy causes, never goes unrewarded. "Zeal", exhorts the *Valmiki Ramayana,* "is potential power and nothing is more powerful than that. There is nothing that cannot be achieved in this world by a zealous pursuit." The *Yoga Vashishtha* has given identical advice. "The soul of man is powerful enough. There is nothing in the world which cannot be achieved by right sort of efforts."

The Bible has given the same assurance. "Ask, and it shall be given unto you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and the door shall be opened unto you." Again: "I also tell you this. If two of you agree on earth concerning anything they shall do, it shall be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Famous psychologist William James has left a similar message of hope. "If you only care enough for a result, you will most certainly attain it. If you wish to be rich, you will be rich; if you wish to be good, you will be good. Only you must, then, *really* wish these things and wish them with exclusiveness, and not wish at the same time a hundred other incompatible things just as strongly."

Undoubtedly we can improve ourselves as well as society, if we only try hard enough. What is required is to establish this as the highest goal of all religions and strive for it collectively, whole-heartedly and systematically. The spiritualisation of man, so long neglected, is our most pressing need today. This is going to be the greatest adventure of the human spirit. That it has never been attempted in the past on a large scale is all the more reason why it should be undertaken now on a co-operative basis, using modern methods and scientific aids. In this noble task the initiative should rightly come from the religious teachers of India. It is their special responsibility and great opportunity for the uplift of mankind. We can depend on it that God is looking forward to the early launching of the enterprise and will crown our efforts with success.

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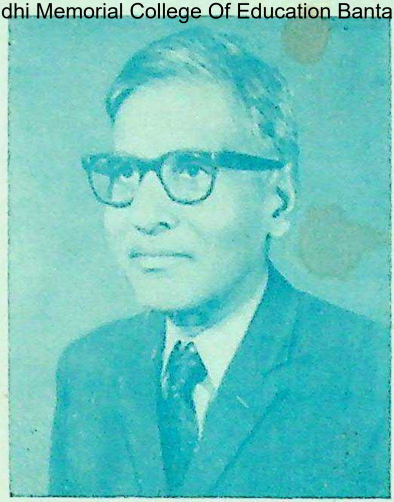

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rajendra Behari Lal, born 1907, had a brilliant academic career, and took his M.Sc. degree in physics in the first division from the University of Allahabad in 1929.

Standing first in an All-India Competitive examination, he joined the Indian Government Railways as an Assistant Transportation Officer in 1930. He held various posts, such as Divisional Superintendent and Chief Operating Superintendent; and retired as Additional Member, Railway Board in 1963.

In 1969-70 he worked as a one-man expert committee on Railway Compensation Claims with the Ministry of Railways, Government of India.

He has been a strong advocate of efficiency in work and administration. Based on his vast studies and practical experience he has written three books on these topics: MANASIKA DAKSHATA (Gita Press, Gorakhpur) THE ART OF EFFICIENT WORKING (Sterling Publishers, New Delhi) and HUMAN ENGINEERING OR THE ART OF ADMINISTRATION (Book Centre, Ranade Road, Bombay).

The study of religion has been his life-long interest, especially its harmonization with modern science. The fruits of his labours in this field are presented in various writings, such as 'THE GITA IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN SCIENCE' (Somaiya Publications, Bombay), 'REDISCOVERY OF RELIGION' (in the press) and the present volume.

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